



Measure

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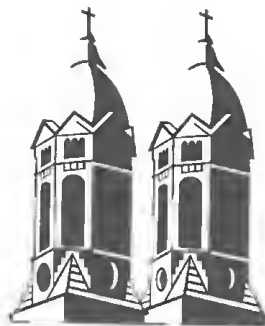
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Measure



SAINT
JOSEPH'S
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A Chance Encounter

Christine Schmelter

Chylar knew that it was only a matter of time before she came face to face with the devil; she just didn't think that it would happen this soon. Sure, she had been seeing the signs all over the place: the huge black dogs that seemed to always be just a few feet behind her as she did her early morning and late night runs, the huge black birds that were constantly perched on the tree limbs above her parked car, the long black shadows that always seemed to be right behind her no matter where she went. No, she had seen the signs, had realized that something bad was about to come to her; she just never imagined that it would be this bad. So when she was sitting in a fancy restaurant, waiting for her blind date to show, she really wasn't all that surprised when he was the one that showed.

"Am I late?" he asked with a sly, sinister smile, the kind of smile that would make men sign over their entire lives and women drop all of their clothes at a minute's glance.

"Isn't this trick a little lame? Let me guess, you planted the idea in Missy's head to set me up on a blind date with you?" Chylar demanded as she took a sip of her Snowtini.

He shot her an appalled look. "Who do you take me for? Some lower level wraith?! I should be insulted," he said, his words emphasizing the fact that he actually was insulted. Chylar raised a finely-shaped eyebrow as she took in the very sight of him. To the casual observer, he was extremely handsome, looking as if he had just walked out of some photo shoot. He was tall with high cheekbones, white blond hair that was slicked back, almost plastered to his skull. His crisp white suit just barely betrayed the muscle that defined his arms and chest, and the only thing that seemed out of place about him were his eyes- eyes that were a liquid, tranquil blue, but looked as if they were the rippling surface of a lake, constantly in motion as flecks of red passed through his eyes as if they were a rising and setting moon. Those eyes were unsettling, but they transfixed Chylar, drawing her deeper and deeper into them. She shook her head, focusing on the salad that was in front of her, realizing all too late that she had just gotten a small sample of the amount of power that he held.

"Okay, so you're my blind date, why? Why have you been following me and why are you here?" she asked him, toying with the martini glass.

Those blue eyes began to ripple faster and faster. "I'm here because I want you. I

want you to join me in hell," he said. He snapped his fingers and a tall pilsner filled with water appeared in front of him.

"You want me to join you in hell? What, is Lilith and the others not enough for you?" she asked coyly.

He scoffed, taking a long drink. "Lilith is a lesbian, and why would I want to have a relationship with an underling?"

Chylar didn't know whether to laugh in his face or run away screaming. Taking pride on her ability not to be scared off so easily, she decided to see where this conversation really was going to go. "So that's why Adam and God cast her out?"

He shook his head, draining the glass and then refilling it. "No, God cast her out because she was threatening to castrate Adam. He sent her to me, and then he tried it again. Now, enough about my mistakes and regrets - I want you. What do you say?"

Chylar stared at the man before her in a sort of dumbfounded awe. She supposed that this whole situation was completely incredible and incredulous, but yet she had no problem believing and accepting the fact that the devil was indeed sitting down right across from her, asking for her to be his bride. She supposed that if this event were taking place at a later date, she would find the whole situation ridiculous, but right now, this meeting made all the events from that week make total and complete sense.

"Why me?" she asked.

He shrugged. "You're pretty, smart, you haven't had a connection to God since you were a child, you're on your way to become a damn good lawyer, and you're the first woman in the prison that you work at to be feared and respected by the death row inmates that you are in charge of," he said, summoning a filet mignon out of the same ether that the pilsner of water had appeared out of.

"So, I haven't believed in you either," she fired back.

"Touché, but you're not supposed to believe in me. Oh, and you're German," he added.

"What does my being German have to do with it?! I'm also Romanian," she snapped.

He looked as if he were getting agitated or desperate, Chylar couldn't tell which.

"Yes, I know, you're a quarter gypsy from your mother's side; that's the reason why I have to ask if you want to come with me, damn gypsies and your superstitions. This would be so much easier if you were just German, Irish, they don't protect their family lines from me," he

said as if that fact was a blessing and a curse.

Chylar raised her hands up, stopping him from trailing on and on. "All you are doing is just telling me things that I already know, you aren't answering my question, why me?" she asked.

"Because I'm lonely," he said simply. He had chosen that exact moment to say those words, the exact moment that Chylar had decided to take another drink of her martini. The surprise of his honesty and his feelings had shocked her, shocked her so bad that most of the drink had shot up to her nose, burning her nasal passages and the remaining cilia that hadn't been destroyed by her constant contact with secondhand smoke. She started to choke as the vodka burned like fire through her throat and nose, but the pain quickly subsided and she glanced up quickly to see his mouth moving frantically.

"Good, all better now. As I was saying, I'm lonely and you would be the perfect match for me. You have a foot firmly planted in the realms of both good and evil, and you're a strong and independent protector. I've been looking for centuries for someone like you, a warrior, protector. All the lives that you've lived in the past, you've been the victim, the innocent martyr, but this life, you've been a fighter, a ruthless and cunning fighter, and that's when you caught my attention," he said.

Damn, she thought darkly to herself, Dad always did say that my stubbornness was going to be the death of me. "Okay, so I'm a fighter, big deal, so are a lot of women, what makes me different?"

He smiled at her, that heart-melting smile once again. He looked as if he were madly in love, but he was being careful not to show it. "In all of my life, I have never been the whole evil guy that everyone makes me out to be. If I had been so evil, then Hitler would still be alive and he would be ruling the world. Sure, I created evil and suffering and temptation, but I don't sit there and corrupt innocent souls, I'm not the one who drives people to kill; I just pass judgment on them once they come to me. You've been the only person that seems to understand that, that understands that even with evil, there has to be a balance. You would know and understand when we need to act in the name of good and in the name of evil, and no one else seems to understand that. You are so much like me, but you are so different. You fight for whatever you believe in, whatever your pillar of strength is, even if that pillar is right or wrong, causing harm or doing good, as long as you love them, you fight for them. I need a warrior like that because that's a warrior I've never had," he said.

Chylar mused for second on his words. He was making a very good and valid point. His argument was making sense, but it still came down to the fact that he was the devil. Had he been a human man, she would have jumped into his arms and handed over her heart and soul, but she couldn't do that with him - she may not have believed in him and his power, but Chylar was still unwilling to give herself up to him.

“How would this work? I have a family, friends, job; I can't just disappear from all of that,” she said.

He shot her another grin, this one made her skin want to crawl. She bit down hard on her tongue to stop herself from reacting to it. “You can, and you will. So what do you say?” he asked.

Chylar mustered up every last inch of her fiery strength and iron will. “No, I'm not going with you,” she said, stating every word with a final emphasis.

The devil looked as if he had just been punched, he appeared to her to even shrink in size but then a red flame filled up those blue pools and he grew to several sizes bigger than what he had been at first.

“No one says no to me!” he shouted. The entire restaurant began to violently tremble and shake. Everyone around them began to shout and shriek as they rushed about. Chylar acted uninterested and unimpressed, an action that she had managed to perfect in her years of bad dates.

“Rejection hurts, I know. Maybe we can still be friends,” she offered. She gathcred up her purse and she carcfully and sexily stood up.

“I'll call you,” she said and then she strode out of the restaurant, turning on one heel, sauntering away with a sexy and powerful strut.

The devil watched her go with hellfire in his eyes, wondering what had just happened.

Blood

Marija Kasley

Pools of blood overflowing,
Becoming a torrent of red,
An unending tide,
And inexorable force,
Flooding the world and drowning it,
Staining everything it touches

The stain is far reaching,
And continues to spread,
But it does not act alone

Rather the deluge is an act of man,
Brought on by his blade,
Perpetuated by his hand,
Yet man cannot see the tide,
For the tide is within him and has clouded his eyes,
Giving him breath and making him dumb

The blood animates man,
Giving him strength,
Leaving an indelible legacy,
But man is blinded by the flood,
It destroys his senses,
Dulls them to non-existence

Without his senses man flounders,
The force of the flood seeks to push him under,
He fights to stay above,
For going under means madness or death

Schnuggles

Shannon Wensel
charcoal and white chalk



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Pretty Pink Stationary

Amber Mathia

Cami began writing letters to her best friends practically as soon as she started singing the ABCs. By the age of seven, it was a weekly tradition for her to sit down in the breakfast nook on Saturday morning, while normal kids were watching cartoons, to write out her latest imaginative story. Cami pretended to be different people in her letters, inventing worlds of princesses, fairies, and, most often, stories of twin sisters going on exciting adventures. Cami always wished for a twin sister. Her real sisters were eight and ten years older than her, so she often felt like a lonely, only child, minus the benefits of being spoiled. The one thing all her letters had in common was that all of Cami's alter egos were named after people in her life, most often her family members.

No one noticed what was happening at first. One Tuesday, when Cami was ten years old, she found out her aunt was leaving on a trip to Paris.

"Mom, I just wrote about that!" Cami exclaimed after her mother told her.

"What are you talking about, Cami? I just told you about it."

But Cami swore she had written a letter to her best friend two days prior. The letter spun a tale about a rich, old aunt who took her niece with her on a trip to Paris, to meet a nobleman. Sure enough, two months later Cami's aunt returned from Paris with a new fiancé who just happened to be a Lord of England.

At age fifteen, Cami was still writing letters to her new best friends, coming up with more realistic stories. She began writing a series of letters about a college girl that had just lost her virginity. The girl was now terrified because her cousin had just found out she was pregnant out of wedlock, and she worried she would suffer the same fate. A week later, Cami's cousin, Angela, told her she was pregnant.

Cami's mother insisted these things were all merely coincidental. Cami put it out of her mind, until she wrote her last letter. She was seventeen years old.

At the start of her junior year in high school Cami received a brand new black Honda Civic for her birthday. This happened after she wrote a letter about a sixteen-year-old that had an extravagant birthday celebration thrown by her affluent parents. The celebration ended in the unveiling of her new car.

"There's no way..." Cami muttered under her breath as she took the keys from her dad. He couldn't afford this, could he? Cami never asked her parents about their financial situation, so it was possible that they had more money than she was aware of, but her older sisters were never given cars, even used cars, for birthdays or any other reasons. In true teenage fashion, Cami hugged her parents and thanked them as she giddily called some friends to go for a joy ride.

"This car, I can't even believe it Cami, it's too great," Jennifer gushed, hopping into the front seat.

"I don't even know where it came from, I wasn't whining to my parents like I usually do..." Cami bit her lip and turned the corner, wondering if she really had written this present into her life.

"Sure," Jennifer rolled her eyes, "come on, Cami, you're 'Daddy's Little Girl.' Are you sure you didn't do any prodding and sucking up for this one, like you did for the spring break trip to Florida last year?" Jennifer seemed convinced that she could tell when Cami was lying.

"I'm tellin' ya, Jen, nothing. I never even mentioned a car. That's normally a sweet sixteen present anyway."

"I guess your parents felt like being original and waited a year," Jen joked.

Cami distractedly showed off her new car to all of her friends. She still couldn't wrap her mind around how this car had come into her life. She wanted to test it out so she headed home two hours before curfew and sat at her desk.

Taking out the pink stationery she had habitually purchased at the convenience store since she was seven, she grabbed a pen and started a letter to her friend Jessica from Washington. It didn't really matter who she wrote to, she just had to know if this was going to work.

Dear Jessica,

Yesterday was the worst day I could possibly have had, until I took a trip home and found a new puppy sitting on the front porch with a bow wrapped around his neck. I looked around to see who could have left him. Hiding around the corner with a rose in his hand was Chad, my best friend since the third grade. He wanted to ask me to his senior prom, I had to say yes even though I had just slept with Rick before I had left campus...

Cami scribbled out an ending to the letter and stuffed it in an envelope. She raced out to the mailbox so the mailman would take it first thing in the morning. Her preoccupation

with the letters made her ignore the enormity of her parents giving her a car. Cami paid little attention to anything, including her homework. She failed two pop quizzes and got a "C" on a paper before the week was up.

"Cami, what is going on with you?" her mom asked over Saturday brunch.

"Huh?" Cami responded, looking up from her bowl of Captain Crunch.

"You've been a little out of it lately, Doodle Bug," her dad added over the top of the newspaper.

"I guess I've just been busy with homework and stuff, sorry. Did I forget to do something for you guys?"

"No, Sweetie, we just wanted to check in with you," her mom smiled, her eyes hinting that she was still concerned.

Cami looked down at her half-eaten cereal and tucked strands of honey-colored hair behind her ears.

"I guess I'll go clean my room." Cami didn't wait for her parents to respond before walking to the kitchen and rinsing the cereal down the garbage disposal. Shuffling her feet, she walked down the hall to her already immaculately clean room. Throwing her face onto her pillows, Cami tried to go back to sleep, clutching her ragged teddy bear.

The doorbell was suddenly ringing. Two, three, four times now. Why are my parents not answering the door? Cami thought.

She scooped herself into a sitting position and saw that it was two-thirty in the afternoon already. Rubbing the sleep from her eyes, Cami got up and rushed to the front door. Through the peephole, she saw a dog sitting on the porch with a ribbon around its neck.

Cami stepped back and gathered her hair into a ponytail. She rung her hands together and her heart pounded. This is not happening. This is not happening. I cannot predict my future or invent my future or whatever the hell is happening.

Cami saw Lewis standing next to her porch, looking anxious. After slowly opening the door, the puppy began sniffing her feet. Cami looked around as though she had not already seen Lewis standing by the door.

"Hi, Puppy, now where did you come from?" Cami questioned in a voice dripping with honey.

"Hi, Cami," Lewis said and rounded the corner.

"Hi," Cami tried sound more enthusiastic, but she couldn't help feeling as though she

was acting out a scripted scene.

"So, what do you think?" Lewis asked after a brief silence.

"You're giving him to me?" Cami asked quizzically.

"He's all yours. What do you think you'll name him?"

"Um, I'm not sure, but....why?"

"You're always there for me, Cam, I just wanted some way to always be there for you," Lewis shrugged shyly, as though he hadn't known Cami for years, but only for a few days.

"Lewis, I just don't know what to say," she stood biting her lip and the puppy licked her bare toes.

"Do you wanna go to the homecoming dance with me?" his green eyes squinted in the sunlight, dancing with nerves.

"Yeah that'll be fun, now get in here and watch a movie with me," Cami stooped to grab the dog and snuggled him in the crook of her right arm, grabbing Lewis's elbow with the left.

Cami and Lewis's whirlwind romance wasn't so odd. He continued to come over and hang out with her the way he had since the day she had moved in, when they were eight. He even waited every day for her to get out of play practice so they could get ice cream. She was already so used to having him around all the time that she couldn't believe it when he told her he had to go to Colorado the weekend she was to play the lead in the school's production of "Beauty and the Beast." She had just written a letter to Jessica describing an elegant dinner date that followed the play where a guy showered his girlfriend with compliments. Obviously, she could not tell Lewis about this.

"Babe, what's the problem? I'll come to the next one. I've watched nearly all of your rehearsals. Plus I'm sure your parents will record it."

"I know..." Cami sighed, unable to give him the real reason behind her disappointment. Maybe she would just have to try writing another letter that would get him back in time. Of all the things he knew about her, he didn't know about the letters. Cami hadn't even brought the subject up to her mother. Guilt could have something to do with it. Cami had never been the type of person that would do anything to get what she wanted. Sure, she whined to her Dad for new clothes or other little things, but if he said no she understood. Now she was letting greed control her life. She used to write letters because she enjoyed the

stories, now she just enjoyed making things go her way. Pushing these thoughts out of her mind, she told Lewis she had to go home.

"Okay, I'll call you when I get back, I promise," he pecked her on the cheek and walked her to the front door, waiting to see that she got in the door of her house across the deserted suburban street.

"Only two days..." Cami muttered, rummaging through her desk drawer frantically. She wasn't sure if the letter had to be received by the other person to be effective, so she knew she had to work fast. She decided to send it to her cousin who only lived across town. She wasn't taking any chances.

The letter told of a girl whose boyfriend was away with his sick uncle, but still flies home to surprise his girlfriend at the opening night of her big performance. She stuffed the flimsy pink paper in its matching envelope and sprinted to the mailbox.

Two nights later Cami was standing backstage peaking around the corner to see if Lewis was in the audience. She couldn't see him, but he had to be there. The play went off without a hitch and she hurried backstage after the curtain call so she could get on with her romantic evening.

"Where's Lewis? I thought he would sit with you guys," Cami greeted her parents before they could even tell her how well she did.

"Let me help you with that, darling," her mom offered, pulling out bobby pins from her hairspray-matted hair.

"He's not here, you knew he was going to be in Colorado," her dad said, puzzled by her expectant look.

"Oh, I guess I just thought he might have come back early."

Arriving home, Cami climbed out of the back seat of her parents' car and saw a police car sitting in front of Lewis's house. Standing in the middle of the street, she saw his mother's hands cover her face, which was contorted with tears of pain. Cami tore through their yard and heard the police officer say, "I'm so sorry, Mrs. Jeffers, your husband and son didn't make it through the plane crash." Falling to the ground, Cami's whole body shook.

A few hours later she awoke in her bedroom, tucked under the blankets the way her mom always used to do when she was little. She had no idea how she got there. Mascara and tear stains still adorned her face as she got out of bed. Dragging the blankets with her,

she walked into the kitchen.

Her parents sat over two cups of coffee, pity covering every inch of their faces. Feeling faint, Cami leaned against the kitchen counter, noticing a pile of mail as her fingers brushed against paper. Looking down, she saw her pink stationary lying on top and realized she had forgotten to place a stamp on the last letter. Screaming violently, she tore it in half and tossed it in the mucky water of dishes soaking in the sink. The words began to bleed through the envelope as they hit the water. Her parents were instantly at her side and her father fished the sopping paper out of the sink. Grabbing it from his hands, Cami let her body sink to the ground again, tangled in her blankets, the soggy paper falling from her fist. The puppy tottered up to her and sniffed at her hand, biting a wad of paper and Cami's skin. The blood stained his honey colored paws, mingling with Cami's tears and dirty dishwater.

Let Us Make You Beautiful

Melissa Klahn

Let us make you beautiful
With all of our processed potions
You would be so perfect
With just an ounce of our moisturizing lotion
Body not perfect
We can fix that with just a bit of liposuction
Breasts too large and unflattering
There is also a procedure called reduction
Life is mediocre and bland
We can fix that by adding in some psychological reconstruction
Let us make you beautiful
It will only cost a million
All of your friends will envy you
As you are created in the image of the perfect woman

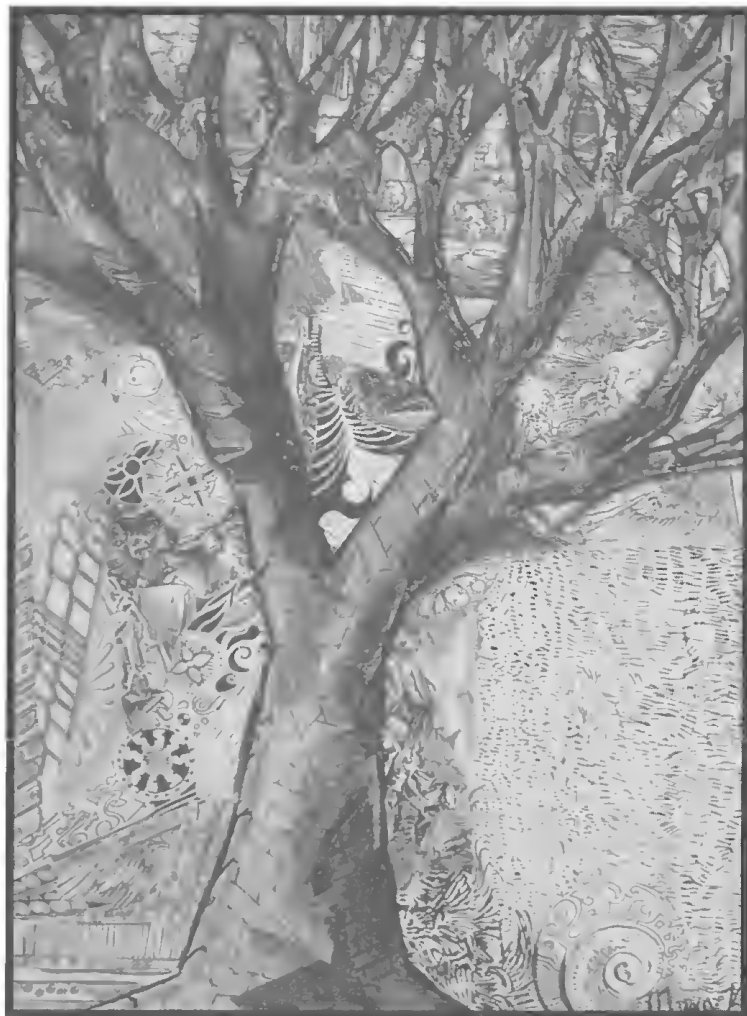
Set Me on Fire

Jessica Lamping

Set me on fire
Watch this skin burn
See how it peels and melts
Inhale the deep scent of burning hair
Breathe it in, can you feel what I feel?
I hope it hurts
I hope you scream
This pain is nothing to me
I'm beyond feeling in this fragile shell
This delicate case will soon rot,
But I will not care
You brought that fire to burn me
Don't you know I'm already dead?
Destroy this weak vessel!
You will pay for it later
I, however, will be free
Free from this wretched and physical world
I am already halfway there
I hope you are well-prepared

Tree

Monica Katich
collage



Dust

Erika Lynn Rowshan

Loneliness is like an empty decorative vase,
It is meant to be filled with glorious springtime flowers,
It sits in a corner, dusty and forlorn,
And the dust just continues to settle,
Creating dark shadows on a once vibrant work of art.

Not In His Storm

Katie Smith

I see the clouds rolling in and oh how it looks like rain
And as always I fight for the welcome change
When it rains it pours on this heart of mine
So I take the storms I feel to him each time

But I know he has lived under his own pouring rain
Yet under his water his heart still doesn't change
He can walk away from what hangs overhead
And not in his storm are words left unsaid

Not in his storm have I ever felt alone
His storm ends so I can find my way home
It's for me that he pushes away his rain
So that I may find comfort in calling his name

He lives in this world for the sake of another's heart
How he eases the miles when we are worlds apart
And he never wanders when your world falls through
Not ever in his storm would he do this to you

He has wings that I know not only I can see
Cause only an angel could find strength to carry me
It's the way that the eyes can surely view
How his heart's written so clearly in what an angel can do

Not in his storm is his work ever done
And even in his storm he hands me the sun
When his world is dark - I always have light
And now how I hold the new color of night

• He takes then he gives to an unhappy face
• So that I may find an awesome place
I have been able to love him more every day
And with his hand in mine the clouds roll away

Not in any storm that I will ever live beneath
Could ever change what I hold here inside of me
Not in any of his storms have I lost my angels touch
To that angel out there, I love him so much

The Stranger

Meagan Fairchild

I looked in the mirror;
Only to see a stranger staring back at me.
Her eyes were cold and empty,
And love wasn't something I could see.

She tried to love others,
But hated only one.
Every scar she has;
Is a bad memory she wants undone.

Loving herself seemed impossible;
So she fell to the ground.
Then something lifted her up,
And God's love was found.

Through her friends and family,
She realized she had worth.
She could finally live her life because,
The person in the mirror was given a new birth.

So one day I found new courage;
To finally go and see.
This time the person in the mirror;
Was no one else but me.

Siamese Twin

Christine Schmelter

Linked together by a thin, but tough membrane of skin

The phrase “attached at the hip” is the reason for the constantly clenched fists,

The broken fingers and noses.

You hate the others cologne, but there is no way to escape it

You both look at one another and you come to the same realization

That skin can’t be so tough when its got a chainsaw buzzing through it

William S.

Michael Crowthers
photography



A.

Michael Crowthers
photography



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Patrick P.

Michael Crowthers
photography



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Michael Crowthers
photography



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Oft at Night

Marija Kasley

Oft at night

As the moonlight tips the waves

I stand beside the ocean

And watch her lonely shores

I listen to the sounds of the surf

As I breathe the salty brine

And find a measure of peace

A calm within myself

The wind brushes through my hair

And whispers in my ear

As the night wraps me

In its cool embrace

The ocean pounds her shores

And sprays coolness on my face

Before I turn and leave

To return again tomorrow

Untouched Dream

Danielle Marshall

And here I find myself again,
As if from a memory of a dream,
A vague vision of the past
Blessing me with renewed hope.
A shower of cherry blossoms
Wipes the slate clean;
Purifies my soul.
I can start anew now,
Without fear of the past
Haunting my every move.
This is my heaven of my mind.
Whenever I need to clear my soul,
I call to mind this tree
With wind blowing its blossoms.
Whenever I seek out safety from the world,
And my own mind,
I ride out to this tree
On a horse that mirrors my soul
And I find security
In my untouched dream.

The Family

Christine Schmelter

Zeke Torth stared up at the three-story, red brick house with a timid look. The house bore a horrific burden that he wanted to run screaming from: the burden of his family. He had been dreading this very moment since this very same day last year, same sinking feeling weighing down in the pit of his stomach as he stared at the ominous prison called "home."

"First one to Canada buys us new identities," a female voice whispered into his ear as he felt a sharp tug on his ear-length brown and green hair. Zeke smiled as he turned around and faced his sister, Zen. Zen and Zeke were fraternal twins; sharing the same round faces and deep green eyes. They had both been born with blond hair, but neither one of them kept that original color. Zen's latest hair color was white and violet.

"I can't deal with a big group of hippies!" Zeke exclaimed.

Zen shrugged. "Them being hippies was fun when we were kids, but I can't deal with another stupid family gathering," she said. Zeke nodded his head as he pulled on the hood of his old and battered Jimi Hendrix hooded sweatshirt. He pulled out his car keys, and he dangled them in front of Zen's face.

"Let's get out of here! We'll just say that we got lost!" he said. They both started to walk towards the car, plans of hitting some B&B in upstate Maine running through their heads, plans of getting as far away from Salem, Mass., as they possibly could, but they were stopped suddenly when the front door was thrown wide open and two people came rushing onto the front porch. They were both wearing long sleeve, tie-dye shirts, and the female was wearing a pair of flared jeans while the male was in a pair of camouflage pants.

"Zeke! Zen! You came!" the female exclaimed as she ran up to them. She wrapped her arms around them both, and she hugged them tightly. Zeke shuddered.

"Hi, Mom, Dad," he said through clenched teeth as they pulled themselves from their mother's arms. Their father rushed up and hugged Zen and slapped Zeke on the back, hard enough to make him stumble forward. Zeke prayed that he would hit the sidewalk and spill his brains on the walkway, but his father righted him by grabbing his hood before he could kiss the pavement.

"We thought you guys would be here last," their father said as he pushed them both

into the house. Zeke tried to run, but his dad just laughed and pushed him through the doorway with a strong push. Something slammed painfully into Zeke's leg again and again, and Zeke screamed out in pain as he looked down, only to see the wheel of his grandfather's wheelchair ramming into his shin bone.

"Get off the road, you damn Nazi! Another Nazi, just can't get away from the God damn Hitlers!" he screamed up at his grandson, just before he sped off into the kitchen, forcing the cat to jettison out of the way with a yowl and a hiss. Zeke silently cursed the old man and his throbbing shin.

"Don't worry about Grandpa, he's been calling everyone a Nazi," their mother explained. Zen stifled a laugh, and Zeke glared at her. Their father laughed at them both before he and their mother disappeared into the kitchen. Zen and Zeke slowly made their way to the dining room.

"Maybe they'll change your name from Zeke to Nazi, Nazi," she taunted him. Zeke let out a groan as he shoved his sister and he went into the dining room. There was a large table in the center of the room that had various hippies of all ages, sizes, and sex. Everyone called out a greeting to them. Their baby nephew, Rivers, clapped his chubby hands together and shrieked, "Eaker! Zen!" Zen and Zeke smiled at the baby as they sat down.

"How come he can say your name and not mine?" Zeke hissed. Zen giggled quietly.

"Cuz I told him your name was Streaker," she said. Zeke glared at her, his anger and agitation rising. He was just about to hit her when their parents came into the dining room.

The whole room became silent as they stared in amazement and awe at the huge, covered tray that the two of them were carrying in. Rivers let out an excited cry as the tray was set down in the middle of the table. Their father stood, holding the handle of the cover in his hand, looking around at his family with a happy expression. With a loud whoosh, he ripped the cover off and he was met with disgusted looks and shocked silence. A large, black and gray tomcat was perched inside the eaten carcass of their Thanksgiving turkey. The tom looked up at them with a hunk of giblets hanging from its mouth and it let out a deep and menacing growl. Zeke took one look at the pathetic animal and their destructed turkey and he just started laughing. No matter how much he couldn't stand it, it was moments like this that made him glad to be a part of this family.

Mother's Wish

Amber Suding
leaded glass



Figure Drawing

Kathleen Grady
charcoal



Body By Velouria

David Spencer

You sit over there on the other side of the room
Taunting me

Well, I don't need you!

All I need is this pencil in my hand
You think you're so beautiful...

You are so beautiful

But you will seduce me no longer
I've been down that road too many times
And you always disappoint me
You represent a dream I used to have

But I have new dreams now!

Please stop staring at me
I want so badly to touch you
I want to slide my fingers down your neck
And I want to play with the strings
Dangling from your body

But I can't

I just can't

You lead me on
And you make me better than I really am

Your golden body
Your curvy figure
Upright and confident
I'll never play with anyone else
Your G-string is too tempting
I must give in to your sound
Let me touch you again

Ash

Gabriele Nichols

You... you know, I didn't notice them. At first. Didn't notice them walking around. Just saw something beside me, corner of my eye. Said it was my evil eye, acting up on me. Just the tricks my mind likes to play, that's all. Nothing more. I'd seen people that weren't really there before.

Anyway, why should I notice them? They don't give change...

Wasn't long 'fore I had to see them. There wasn't just a few in the crowd. Now they were everywhere, standin' in the sun for all ta see. 'Cept nobody saw them. People just walked right past them, just like they do with me every day. Not even turning their heads.

But they done something I'd never seen before, people walked straight through them, too. I almost felt bad for those things. Nobody notices some crazed lookin', homeless bum like me... but at least nobody walks through me. Course, it was then I realised those things weren't just my eyes blurring over, or that weirdness in my head affecting my sight. Those things... they looked like people. I mean, their forms, they seemed human... like echoes of somebody. But they were completely black, from head to foot, and... bleary? Nah, blurry. They was blurry.

At first, those things just drifted aimlessly, as if they just arrived from some other country and were lost. I watched them, still trying to figure out if I had finally gone completely 'round the bend. They were kinda beautiful then; I even made out some features on they faces... faces lacking any expression, like my mama's face at her funeral. Thinkin' of mama... when she was alive, when I still had a home, and nobody told me I was too messed up in the head to work or live... nobody ignoring me, kicking me around, letting me starve on the street... but I'm losing track of myself. I finally decided that if I wasn't completely crazy, I was seein' ghosts. God, how stupid I was... ghosts ain't black as night, ghosts just ain't like those things...

After a week... or maybe it was two... there was almost as many of the things of black as there were people passing me by. And being in the center of a big city like this, that's a heap of... unexplained phenomena. I think that's what you're supposed to call it. Soon enough, people couldn't walk a foot without running through one. And they started

to... suck in some of the black things. If they breathed in when they walked through one of 'em, part of the thing would go in them. And those that breathed in... they started to look kinda pale. Even worse, the black things didn't seem too pleased when it happened. Don't ask me how I know, I just know. They wasn't pleased.

Watching this pattern, breathing in the blackness, I soon realised what I was missing. Those things weren't no ghosts with no body, they were made of somethin'. They was ash, entire bodies made of ash. I think I remember at Mama's funeral, they talked about ash to ash or something... I didn't understand it at the time. Maybe this is what they was talking about?

My findings made me very happy, at least for a moment. At least I finally had a name for the damn things other than "black things." No, now they had a name... the Ash Men. Alright, it ain't so bright, but at least it was a name. Not that I had anybody to tell, but still, they had a name...

As I said, the Ash Men weren't too happy once the people started to breath them in. Not that the people were enjoyin' it, they looked a year deader every time they inhaled some of that ash. The Ash Men, though, they started moving out of people's way. Then they started moving together, like followin' a plan. They stood at the same spot, or they followed the same path, or, what gave me the chills, they followed the same people. Every day, I'd see the same Ash Men following the same people, copyin' their every move. All of them seemed to be waitin', biding they time...

I kinda lost track of time then, as I do sometimes. I just know it was a while, with two things happenin' as far as I remember. The Ash Men, they continued to grow in number, though some of the ones I was used to secin' disappeared. The other thing... well, people started killin' themselves. Not the usual sad moron that'd jump off a buildin', kinda commonplace in this city... no, this was a plague of suicide, seemed almost as many a day as I saw new Ash Men.

I was readin' bout these deaths, from a newspaper I managed to grab when the newsman was yellin' at some young troublemakers, when I finally saw one of these poor souls myself. She was a pretty girl, looked like one of the ones that might at least acknowledge I lived before giving me that "Sorry, I don't have anything smaller than a 20, and you can't make change" look. Of course I can't make change, I'm on the street... sorry, lost the point again.

Anyway, this girl, like somethin' from a movie, just stands on the edge of this bridge,

a nice long drop to the river below. A perfect dive might let ya survive, but she didn't look like she was goin' for some perfect dive. Nah, she had her arms outstretched, her eyes closed, ready to just fall over the side. 'Bout all it looked she could do, cause she was pale, like there was no life left in her.

Before I could move, 'fore I could even drop the paper, she fell over the edge. And as she fell, she opened her mouth, wide. So wide, I covered my ears, expectin' some blood-curdling shriek. But no sound emerged. Instead, a black cloud poured from her mouth, filling the air around her before drifting off on the wind.

At that moment, it looked like she was wakin' up from some dream. The color, it returned to her face, and her hair looked so bright and lovely in the rushin' air. I think I even saw her open her eyes... right before she hit the water. I still shudder thinkin' 'bout it, I think I could hear her neck snap from where I stood... I've seen others now, too, but I just can't bring myself to talk about more of those...

Didn't take me long to realise that cloud was no cigarette smoke or somethin'. No, that black cloud, that was one of the Ash Men. An entire onc of them, not just a little bit. I started to see them actin' everywhere. If anyone got near one, the Ash Man would surround them, have to be chokin' the person, until the ash was all breathed in like smoke. The person wouldn't realise they was filled with that ash, but they felt it, alright. They stopped lookin' human, and started looking dead. And I know where they was going when they walked away, off to a nice little place to end their own life, with the Ash Man escaping in their last breath.

How did I avoid the Ash Men? I don't know, maybe they just didn't take notice of me, or maybe I just avoided 'em without thinking. All I know, it took a long while before I finally ran into one. I was runnin', being chased from some store for shoplifting a little food, nothin' much, when I turned blind down an alley to freedom. Straight into a black cloud of ash.

The Ash Man, hc, I'd know it was a he soon, covered me, leaving not an inch of my body untouched. I tried to hold my breath, tried runnin' forward, but I couldn't see in the ash, and I couldn't breathe, and I fell over my own feet, hit the ground, smashed my ribs, the air rushed out my body, and the ash came in after it...

The first thing I felt, well, was nothin'. I didn't feel, I couldn't... couldn't see either. 'Cept, I did see things, just not through my own eyes. No, I saw a life, someone else's, pass before my eyes. Whoever it was, it was a man, a cruel man. His life went by in fast-forward,

and as it rapidly headed to its grisly conclusion, I knew what I was seeing. I was seeing the ash man's life. At least its life before it was ash. As the flash came to an end, I saw some things that make me want to wretch just thinkin' about them. Images... they didn't make any sense. So horrible... like I was seeing Hell itself...

And then, when the images was done, I could see again. But I felt... I felt pain, like the inside of my body was burning, my soul was burning... the burn was worse than that winter three years ago. The one right after Mama died, and I had never slept outside in the winter. The cold, frost bite, it burned, it killed people I knew, my fellow forgotten, ignored, kicked about people, park benches being no comfort or protection from that pain...

The pain of that winter, that was nothin' compared to this pain. It lasted... I don't know how long, time was nothin' when that pain came. Maybe it was only a moment... whatever it was, that moment burned everything away. My soul, it was dead, everything inside was dead. I just wanted to die. In the few years I've had to live and beg, I've never really wanted to die. But right then, I was ready to end all the pain forever. I didn't care how.

'Fore I could go find something high to jump off of or something big to jump in front of, I suddenly doubled over heaving, while the ash escaped my mouth. Instead of drifting off, it simply stood in front of me, and stared with that dead face. And then it walked by me, and avoided me. It avoided me. Now they all avoid me.

I don't know why the thing didn't lead me to die, like some dumb animal off a cliff. Maybe I was already so miserable; it didn't think I was worth the time. Or maybe... maybe since I can see them, since I know they're there, maybe that's why I can resist it...

Doesn't matter. I'm the only one that can see the things, I think. Even if I did tell anybody about the Ash Men, they'd just lock me away in some house for the nuts. Course, that might not ever happen either. Cause every day I see more of the Ash Men, they outnumber the people now. Lord, there's so many of them now, and they've started leaving the city. People keep killin' themselves here, but I see most of the Ash Men wandering off. It's like a black wave is starting spread out in all directions.

I think they're people, at least by what the one Ash Man showed me, and if I'm right, they're people damned. It sounds like the stuff Mama used to read, about the End Times, why I had to be a good little boy lest the Devil gets me. Maybe the Devil let all the damned out... or maybe God let them out, let them cull the Earth...

Maybe, but whatever it is, the end is coming fast. The Ash Men, they continue their march out of the city, into the world. Suicide will spread, like some 11th plague, maybe the one Moses forgot to mention, until there's barely anybody left, us few miserable dogs that can see the ash. Maybe I'm the only one. I've learned to accept it, really, long as I can avoid seeing the people die.

Why should I try and warn them? They don't give change...

Your Reflection

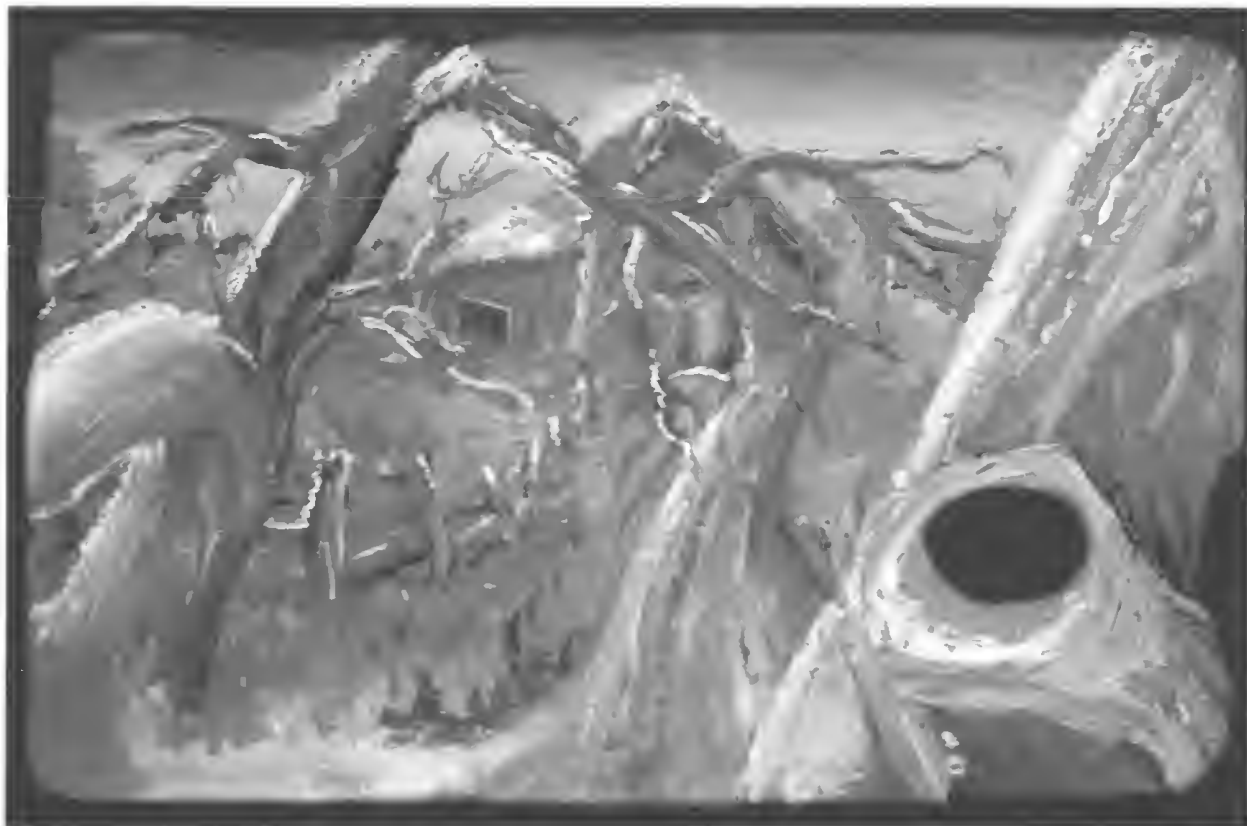
Michael Crowthers
pumpkin



Measure
Page 43

Autumn Barn

Ryan Preston
oil on wooden pallet



Body Caught in a Storm

Melissa Klahn

She watches the rain fall down
In tiny pure droplets of sadness
Just as the tears are freely rolling
Down her own cheeks
She curls herself into a ball
And hides what she secretly knows

Covered in dark clouds of gray and blue
A map of angry storms
Covers each contour of her body
She is in constant wonder
If the storms will ever cease to exist

As the rain slows the cold sets in
And her body soon becomes encased in shivers
Left with only her body and thoughts
She knows in her heart the storm is never ending
In this place she calls a home

A Memoir

Jessica Lamping

As I sit down to write this, my good friend Arturo is just regaining consciousness from the blow to the head he received when he entered my house. Arturo has been a close friend of mine for about three years now. We met through a mutual friend. He was dating a girl I worked with, but that didn't pan out so well. They broke up a few weeks after I met him, and he and I have become best friends.

I have considered writing a memoir for about 12 years, at least that's when I figured out what a memoir was. I've been doing this since I was eight. I don't know why I started. I just do it. I do not regret anything I have done, not even befriending people like Arturo. No man is an island, I learned in college. Humans are social creatures. And I am just a human man. Hold on.

Arturo is squirming a lot. I have to keep his restraints tight and his mouth covered. Once I finish this page I will explain some things to him. I'm sure he is wondering what the hell is going on. I may even read this to him. He has always enjoyed my writing. He might like to hear this piece, as well.

Arturo has amazing eyes. I am man enough to admit that. They are the reason he never left a party alone. Just one look in those sparkling hazel eyes and most women are gone. And usually half-undressed. He can give the saddest looks. Such powerful eyes. I am certain that the scared, teary look he is giving me now is genuine. He has always been a genuine guy, even when trying to get laid.

I am not sure where to start with this. It might be best to start from the beginning, or at least really close. I haven't decided yet how much to disclose. If I'm revealing part of this, I might just go for it all. Why not?

When I was eight years old, I realized that I am most comfortable in cemeteries. There is something about death that I find distractingly peaceful. Both of my parents had large families, so I experienced death quite frequently. I enjoyed the funerals because that was when I was most relaxed. Soon it would happen that while other kids were playing in the park and having sleepovers, I was wandering into unlocked gates and napping on freshly moved dirt. That's not to say I didn't have friends. I had a very typical childhood. My parents are still

married. I got detention, went to prom, and tried beer just once. All normal things kids do. My family was just the same. My parents are still married, now living in Utah, and I have an older brother that still thinks I'm just a dorky kid (despite the fact that I am now 29 and he is 41). There has been nothing in my life that would make it stand out. Hell, nothing in my life would be interesting enough to put into a mediocre sitcom. Who would want to watch a show about a guy that likes to dig up dead people?

I'm pretty sure I was almost nine the first time I did it. I had wandered out of the house around 2 am with my Swiss Army knife that my grandfather had given me for Christmas. I figured that was all I needed in case I ran into trouble. I walked for about seven minutes until I reached the old Clover Cemetery. At the time it was simply the closest. Later on it would become my favorite. I was meandering down the rows looking for a fresh plot. Close to the middle I found a spot. I had arrived there that night with the intention of sleeping a few hours. That changed when I saw the old shovel propped up against a neighboring tombstone. It was as if someone had left it there for me. I took the shovel and started digging in the loose dirt. Once I had cleared away the dirt I pulled back the lid of the coffin, revealing the decaying body of a woman. Using the knife I cut a lock of the woman's hair. I placed the lock of hair and the knife in my pocket, shut the lid, and lifted myself out of the hole to cover it back up. I know that most people would blow this story off right about now. The first and most obvious question would be: How could an eight year old boy dig up a grave, open a sealed casket, and fill the hole back up, all by himself, in such a short amount of time? I wish I could explain it, but I can't. Things like that just come naturally to me. I'm nothing special, and I'm in ok shape, but I can dig up a corpse like it's my job.

Oh, I have no idea who that woman was. I did not look at the name that night, and I never bothered to check later. I've never made it a point to discover whose body I'm using. I take what I need and move on.

So that's when it all started. Nothing dramatic. No one chased me. I've been doing this every week for over twenty years, and I have never been caught. It's almost humorous.

Arturo is crying again. He keeps murmuring. I know he wants to leave, but the more he distracts me the longer this will take. I want to make sure I get this thing written exactly right. I think it's time people know what I've been doing. I think there's a change coming in my life. I'm ready for it.

Maybe it would be better to just tell Arturo this, and then wait for his feedback. That way, I know what else to include. This is my life, so obviously I know what's going on. I need another person to ask me questions.

I guess one really big question would be "why?" I don't even know where to start with that one.

I do it because I can. I feel drawn to it. I don't always take a lock of hair, but it is my favorite. I've taken fingers and toes, even whole limbs, but I still prefer hair. I like the way it burns. I don't know how else to explain what I do. I will read this to Arturo, then come back and finish it.

I didn't know Arturo knew those kinds of works. He's always been so well-spoken. After he cried and yelled at me, he asked why I burned the things I took. I don't know if I can really explain all of it. I burn them because that's what feels right. Every time I burn something I've taken, I get a piece of their soul. Don't ask me how I know, I just do. It's not like I'm some crazed demon, devouring souls every chance I get. I am only human, and I am not crazy at all. I do what I do, and that's all that matters.

My favorite experience was a few years ago. I had taken a lock of hair from a young lady, maybe nineteen, with deep, natural red hair. Her hair was cropped short, and she had a widow's peak. I actually chuckled aloud when I did it. While I was getting the hair I was overcome with the most amazing feeling. It was like an ecstasy-induced, drunken orgasm, running through my body. I don't even know if I was breathing. I haven't had any bad experiences, but this one was exceptionally incredible.

Arturo is shouting prayers now. He seems to think I am some kind of Hell-creature. I try to calm him and assure him that I am not, but he won't listen. He recoils each time I reach for him. His sparkling eyes are leaking a steady stream of tears down his unshaven face. He's such a good guy. I wish I could get him to understand his role in all of this.

I have never killed a person before. I thought that might be important to explain. I deal with those who are already dead. It had not occurred to me to kill someone. I thought the best way for me was to take what's already dead. I have recently discovered that those pieces of souls do not last. As I approach my thirtieth birthday, I feel somewhat rushed to get as many as I can. That is where Arturo comes in. I think he will be a good beginning for me. His soul will take me to a different level.

Arturo is laughing hysterically now. He told me that I am crazy for this. His eyes are showing hints of madness now. I think he is becoming frantic from being tied to that chair for three days. I should be ready to go by tomorrow afternoon.

My good friend continues to tell me what a monster I am. I have given up trying to defend my humanity. I know what I am. Is it really necessary for me to explain all of this? At first I wanted to. That was the entire purpose of this journal. But now I am not sure if it is worth it. No one will understand. Why should I even try?

I would like to apologize for that last entry. I have calmed down since then. I was very upset with Arturo. I had hoped that this would all make sense to him. I had this foolish thought that he would be able to explain this to me. I thought he was the key to this. Sometimes I need to remind myself that no one, not even I, understands what I do. It was childish of me to react as I did. It is perfectly reasonable for Arturo to call me those things. No one wants to die. Especially at the hands of their closest friend.

Arturo is ignoring my apology. I bought him some Oreos to make up for it. Anytime we would sit down to watch a movie, Arturo would pull out a box, eat the icing, then stack the cookie sides. It was tradition. When he saw the box he made a slight whimpering sound. I tried to remind him of those movie nights but he just fixed his eyes on a pile of dust on the second shelf of my bookcase. He is simply dwelling on the bad stuff and ignoring all the good times we had. That is not a healthy way to deal with the situation.

I have already mentioned that I do not know why I do this. I wish I could offer more explanation, but I don't even understand it. I go by feelings. When I burn something from a person I dug up, it feels like I am taking a part of their soul into me. I can't describe that feeling any other way. On my twenty-eighth birthday I started feeling like things were getting weird. Like all that I had been doing was just preparation. It was almost as if I had a deadline. I figured that the deadline would arrive on my thirtieth birthday, just because things happen in threes. I will explain that later.

I am not sure what will happen. I started going out more after my birthday. I felt like I had to get as much as I could, like I would be tested soon. Just thinking about it still makes me anxious. I can feel the pressure even more because my thirtieth birthday is tomorrow. I will have dinner with my parents, and then I will return here. Hopefully I will figure out what happens then.

Arturo is asking if we were ever real friends. If we weren't, he would not be sitting here with me. That response did not comfort him.

While Arturo is sleeping, I will explain a bit about the threes. It is commonly known that things tend to happen in threes, both good and bad things. There have been many instances in my life where three people have died over the course of a week or so. The first one I can remember would be the death of the grandfather that gave me this knife. His death was followed by my great aunt Pauline, and a few days later was my cousin Sue. It is not just people dying. One time in high school, during my junior year I think, my dad bought me my first car, my girlfriend took me to the most amazing concert I've ever been to, and my uncle Carl died, leaving me all his old vinyl records. That was just over the course of three days. Just yesterday I had three separate encounters with crows. The first time was when I was gathering wood, the second when I left to get some peanut butter from the store, and the third was when I went outside to check on the pyre. Each time there was a lone crow cawing at me from the old, dying tree on the side of my house. These kinds of things happen to me.

I am quite pleased with the small house I have. I picked it because it is a hilarious shade of robin's-egg blue. And because there are no close neighbors, and there is a nice wooded area in the back. It's perfect. About fifty yards into the woods I built a nice-sized pyre. I plan on getting the fire started around 10 so it is plenty hot when I get Arturo out there. Arturo is asking questions again. He gave up on being stoic. I knew he wouldn't last like that. He wants to know how long I plan on keeping him here. I told him that it would be over tonight. I think a small part of him still thinks he will be walking home some time. People are funny like that.

It's almost like Arturo was anticipating this. He won't fall asleep. I've been waiting for him to pass out but he's just sitting there, occasionally glancing over at me and twitching. I'm going to have to fix this soon.

Arturo is looking peaceful now. I had to crush up some sleeping pills in his mashed potatoes. It's cliché, I know, but I have grown impatient. I think I put enough pills in it so he won't wake up once he's on fire.

I'm not sure what I was expecting. I guess I thought I would feel something different when I took Arturo out there. Maybe some remorse for killing a good friend. Nothing really. I had built these small fires around Arturo to offset the smell of burning flesh. I even threw

some incense on the small fires.

Sitting here, watching my friend burn and crumble, I wonder, for the very first time, what drove me to do this. It's not normal to dig up corpses, or to hold your best friend hostage, then burn him alive. Is there something wrong with me? I can't be evil. Evil is just different. But I can't be good either. Where do I fit in the grand scheme of things? There must be some kind of purpose to this unusual, disturbing life.

Glancing up from my seat on the chopped wood pile, I see an old man warm his hands on Arturo's fire. I have never been noticed before. Where did he come from?

The man begins to walk toward me. He moves quickly, with a smile on his tired face.

"I suppose you have many questions," the man says, startling me. I have not moved from the wood pile.

"This is private property—," I start weakly. The man just ignores my feeble statement.

"I'm sure you want to know why you do what you do," the man states with a hint of a smile in his voice.

"You don't know what I do!" I nearly shout. The man just laughs and shakes his head.

"I know everything about you. I know that you've been doing this for years. I know that everything you've been doing has been preparation. I needed to know that you could handle this job."

"What job?"

"What job do you think?"

Something clicks in my head.

"The souls."

The man kicks a stick as he walks closer to me. Everything around me seems to fade out a bit and get fuzzy. The man is the only thing in focus. He smiles at me with a sort of happy exhaustion.

"You have passed each test perfectly, even from the time you were eight. Very few can do that."

"But I don't even know how—," I start.

"But you do," the man says almost urgently. "If you just let things happen like you have been, it will be just fine."

Something strong has come over me. I barely even recall the past few days. Arturo's

body is somewhere close, probably still smoldering. Should I just go with my feelings? My heart and my gut are saying the same thing: Listen to this man. It's your future.

"So what do I do now?" I ask. Everything is falling into place. I know this is what I should be doing.

"You take over. Starting with me," the man answers before throwing himself onto Arturo's fire. I jump back as the rest of the world comes back into focus. I stare at the man's body for a few minutes, watching his body burn. Soon I notice he is dead, and I know what I am to do. I understand this now. I know why I've done all these things.

Do you?

Through the Eye Of

Katie Vanderkolk

permanent marker and watercolor pencils



Ribbon of Hope

Ashley Reed
oil



Measure
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Latin Groove

Robert Perez
mixed media collage



Where I've Been

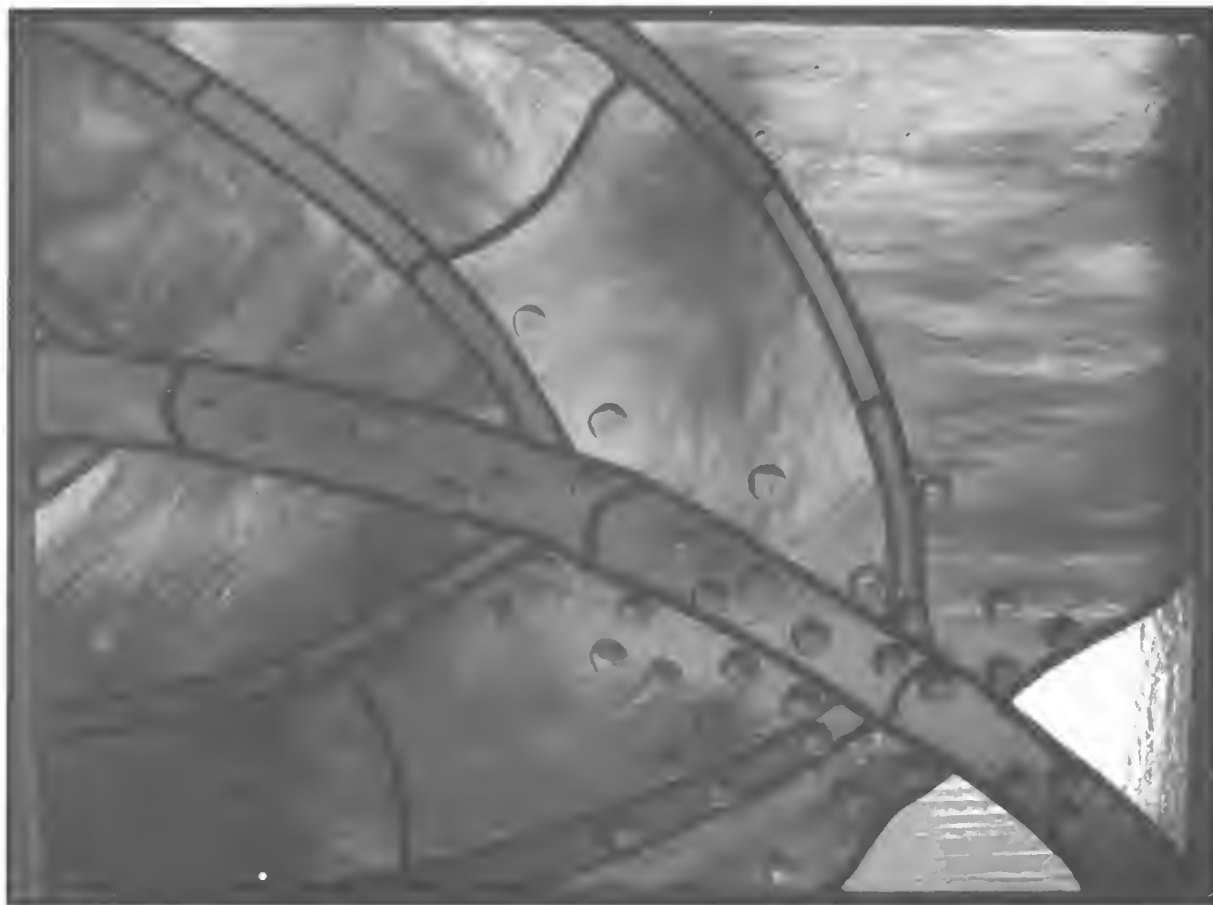
Ryan Preston
acrylic



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Autumn Rain

Angela Potticary
leaded glass



Measure
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I Love My Boyfriend

David Spencer

Nina's face was burrowed in his shoulder, trying to find solace in the warmth of the nook in his armpit. Her hands would wander around the geography of his body, caressing his chest and his arms. He was her man, something she could call her own, like the entitlement she expressed in the screensaver on her computer, which stated: "I love my boyfriend." The morning sunlight swam into the room illuminating the dust floating through the air. Nina felt safe.

"Tell me you love me," she requested of him.

He responded earnestly, "I love you."

Nina reached up and kissed him softly on his slender cheek. He did not need to do anything but love her for her to give herself away to him. She was his and he was hers. It was a simple exchange.

As she let her finger idle through his chest hair, thinking of her life before James, she suddenly had an urge to find out why he had ever noticed her in the first place. "James, why me? Why did you choose me instead of any other girl?"

James lowered his chin and looked down at her. "You liked me. You made me feel good about myself." Nina blushed as he said this. She remembered when they first met at a graduation party in June. He was actually a year older but had come to the party with a friend. They were introduced and started talking about movies. He kissed her the next weekend.

"Do you think that we'll get married someday?" she quietly asked him.

After a contemplative pause, he told her, "I don't know of anyone else I'd rather be with." He always said just the right things, and she always believed him. To her, he was the most sincere person in the world. She had never allowed herself to be closer to anyone else. They had only spent the summer together, but all the time spent lying in his arms made her feel like they had been together forever.

He started to cough heavily. He picked up his arm from around her frame to cover his mouth as his body loudly heaved forward like a cat with a hairball. His smoking seemed to be shoving his lungs closer to his throat with each cough. "Sorry," he whispered. She rubbed

his shoulder in support.

"Would you go to church tomorrow with me and my family?" James asked her suddenly. Nina was struck by this generous offer. She had never been to church before, but at this moment she felt like she would do anything for James.

"I would love to go to church with you and your family," she responded honestly.

The next day she wore her one outfit that seemed Church-appropriate and put on the make-up she would usually only wear when she would visit her grandmother in Naperville. She was anxious as she walked down the steps of her front porch and approached the car where James, his mother, and his younger brother were waiting. She wanted to make a good impression on James' mother, because they had rarely spoken to each other beyond the typical chit-chat that filled the moments when James was taking the dogs outside before he would take Nina out to eat on Friday nights. Nina wasn't sure how to communicate with James' mother. As she walked towards the car she wondered what they had in common to talk about. Suddenly she realized they had James in common.

"Hello, Miss Simpson," Nina greeted as she got into the backseat with James' little brother.

"Hi, Nina," she responded without turning around. Nina was nervous but started to tell how James asked her to go to church and how excited she was to go because her family never went to church.

"You never had to go?" asked James' littler brother Damon.

"Well, no. My family isn't very religious," she told him.

James immediately changed the subject. "We'll stop and get donuts afterwards, so it's not all bad."

"Oh, yummy," she responded. She wanted to connect with James' mother over James but it didn't look like it was going to work. She stayed quiet instead.

During church, Nina spent a lot of time thinking about her faith, or lack thereof. She felt so much less significant than all the other people in room. She tried to pay attention to the sermon but her eyes kept wandering around looking for other people her age. She only saw one other teenage girl who was sitting next to a much older woman, probably her grandmother. Mass soon ended.

Next weekend, they couldn't go out on Friday, and she waited for James to call her the next day. By Saturday night, she had not heard from him and spent most of her evening with

her little sister on the computer and watching movies. Upstairs, her phone rang. She ran up to get it.

"Hello?"

"Hey, Nina, hey."

It was James. But he didn't sound like James.

"Hi, sweetie, what are you doing?"

"Oh, I'm just hanging out with Kyle." He said something unintelligible and then coughed.

"Are you okay, baby?" she asked her boyfriend.

"Yeah. I just wanted to call and check up on you since you probably missed me. Sorry."

She realized why he was apologizing.

"Are you drunk, James?"

"We drank a little, no big deal. I still miss you. We can go to church tomorrow and get donuts."

She started to cry. This did not sound like him, and she did not like how he was talking.

"James, I have to go. Call me when you're sober."

She hung up on him. She felt weak but she couldn't help crying. It was only worse because it sounded like he was having a good time and she was stuck at home. She missed him but she didn't want to see him then. She went to bed early.

The next morning he didn't call. Ten o'clock came and went, and that meant she could not go to the ten o'clock mass with him and his family. She didn't know if he was at mass or if he was hung over. As the day went on, she wanted to call him but was afraid of what he might say or do. Instead, she waited. She waited until the next weekend and the next Sunday, and she still had not heard from him. She assumed the worst, such as that he was with another girl or something, but without warning he called that Sunday night. He only told her that he was sorry he drank again but that it's not a big deal. He told her that he missed her and although she missed him, too, she hung up and changed her screen saver.

Learn to Speak

Danielle Marshall

I hope you know
I never appreciated
This before
Lying lips
Of tongue-tied silence
Cuts me more than
Venomous words of spite
Learn to take my advice
I've never followed it myself
But chance may prove
You can be better than I can be
If you only learned to speak

Paradise Will Break Free

Angela Potticary

She stands there, naked and brazen, daring each passerby to look her straight in the eye. Her body is immaculately toned: skin tanned golden brown from the rebel sun, legs cemented to the hot, sadistic gravel with muscles that refuse to go unnoticed. Her bold, ample hips declare strength unknown to generations of a patriarchal society. Deep breaths of humid air fill her lungs, thrusting her beautiful abdomen forward and back again; tiny beads of sweat form beneath the full of her perfectly rounded breasts which rise up and down with each swell of her abdomen. Her balled fists remain firm at either side, giving way to her sculpted arms and shoulders. Her long, graceful neck merges into her surprisingly hard jaw line; full, sensual lips part ever so slightly revealing stark white teeth. Her prominent nose and cheek bones glisten from the beating sun as the wind makes her wild, wavy hair dance in protest of the roots holding it hostage. Her presence overwhelms and mystifies the very creators of her image, of her manifestation.

But her eyes are empty of emotion, vacant of thought. She is dying on the inside as no one stops to look past her surface. No one dares to look her straight in the eye. Despite the heat of the raging sun, her soul is trapped inside her frozen body. She does not know true love, only lust. She cannot feel true beauty, only dimension. She has not experienced true kindness, only expectation. No one dares to look past the physical representation of societal perfection for fear that something independent, courageous and unrestrained will be looking back.

Slowly, precariously, the ice melts bit by bit as her soul waits patiently, ready to penetrate the minds of all those who dare to look her straight in the eye, who will accept and understand her strength. And all paradise will break free at last.

The Death of Me

Katie Smith

Everything you could have been
Everything you'll ever be
All you dream about
And everything you see
All the times you feel so much
And times you let them go
Times you thought you wanted love
And times you'll never know
Parts of you, you cannot hide
Parts I'll never see
Parts that want to be alone
And parts you share with me
All the things that make you whole
I love like no one could
This is why I dream of you
In ways a lover would
For friends it is not enough for me
I know it has been years
But my love has grown to more than this
Despite my greatest fears
Take a look behind these eyes
The love I feel for my best friend
Though he will never see

Thanatopsis

Stephanie Sonderman

ink



Martyr

Jessica Lamping

Oh, we would be so lucky
To be touched by martyr's blood
Extend your hand, coated in that thick red liquid
Persecuted by everyone that won't follow your word
By your own hand hearts were destroyed
Hearts that will never trust again
Are you proud?
Is that what you meant to accomplish?
If you would only look down at us in pity
From that cross on which you've hung yourself
You cannot raise your great eyes to meet ours
How humble you must be!
Oh, we, the sinners in your world, should be on our knees in front of you
If only we had the courage to do what you did
If only I could use my words like you did
And betray my closest companion
If only I could spill blood like you, oh martyr,
I would be hanging next to you

My Canto

Mike Koscielny

Months ago, I did something that made me glad.
I dropped a lot of dollars into pre-ordering a Wii.
However, it really pissed off my dad.

My dad just couldn't see
Why I would spend so much.
He didn't understand that it is a bringer of glee.

The pre-order process was totally clutch,
As I waited online, repeatedly refreshing a page.
So much time and money, just to feel its touch.

However after the fact, I feared my dad's rage
Because, "that was too much money to spend!"
I retorted, "Not in this day and age."

He told me it was just a trend,
But I knew otherwise. It was so intuitive
That I ignored his griping, hoping one day our relations would mend.

I was overzealous; I knew I couldn't live
Without this amazing machine.
Excuse me, I'm gushing about it like a leaky sieve.

Before it came, I was anxiously giddy like a high school teen.
Then I played it and was overwhelmed with joy,
Because it was more amazing than anything I'd ever seen.

I finally had my new toy
And I loved to play with it.
To any Jew, I'd be called a silly goy.

I plug more hours onto it bit by bit.
Pouring my time into these games
Never ever stopping, except to take a poop.

The amount of time I spend playing shames
Any work ethic that may exist in my big toe.
So there was some truth to my dad's many blames.

I just love to sit and play my Wii with tons of gusto.
It's terribly addicting, you see, and that's my excuse
For forgetting to write this canto.

The Third Wail

Christine Schmelter

It was three years ago today when I came across the banshee; the old hag had been looking for me for twenty-five years, and here she had finally found me. My mum had always told the story that the banshee had wailed on the day I was born. She had held her breath to see if the banshee had come for me, but that night she had taken a hold of my da and my uncle. My uncle had clutched his chest, screaming in Gaelic as he collapsed into the rocker, taking his last breath just as I had violently screamed out my very first.

My da had never believed the old legends of the banshee and her wail, but she didn't care; she sounded her wail for a second time as she dragged away my da's fighting soul after the ambulance that had come for me and my uncle sent my da's body flying the length of five houses.

My mum had always considered me lucky, lucky that I was the only male O'Tooley to survive that fateful night, but I knew better. She had come for me as well; she just hadn't been prepared for my da and uncle to die so quickly.

"Finnery Phillip O'Tooley," she called out in that deep and ancient voice, a voice that chilled the bones of even the most bloodthirsty of all warlords.

"Aye, 'tis me," I responded back in my cocky overconfident tone. I had survived the bitch once, and I was sure that I could do it again.

Her gray and wispy legs finally stopped floating and touched down on the cold, slick road. Her long and tangled mass of white and gray curls stopped flowing over her face, revealing huge black cavernous eyes and a wide, gaping O of a mouth. I took a step back at the sight of her, feeling my stomach clench in my throat as a small black wraith snake poked out of her left eye socket, rushing to disappear in her right nostril. I shuddered and she laughed, blackness screaming and moaning as it escaped her open mouth.

"I've come for ye boy, I laid me claim on ya the day yer were born," she raged.

I dug my nails into the palms of my hands as I buried them deep in the pockets of my navy pea coat.

"Aye," I started to say. "Ye laid a claim on me the day I was born, but ye didn't take me that now did ya? So now yer lost yer claim."

As I had started speaking, the banshee had been puffing herself up, started floating again, her claws extended out to me, ready to rip my soul from my very body, but as soon as I finished my last words, she dropped back to the ground, looking as if all of the force and wind had been knocked out of her.

"Wait, hunh, aye?" she muttered, clearly flabbergasted by my boldness. It was the very moment that I started to loose my fear of her.

"No, it's true! Ye didn't take me that night, ye took me da and me unc, and ye only wailed twice, not thrice, so you have no say on me!" I shouted out, my luck and cockiness making me arrogant, super confident.

The banshee screamed, a scream that came from the depths of Hell itself. She leapt up off the ground, and she flew at me, her claws once again outstretched and ready. My super confidence plummeted to the very tips of my gray woolen socks. She flew at my head and I let out a frightened, girlish squawk as I dropped to my feet and clamped my arms tightly over my head so she wouldn't be able to grab my hair or least of all my brains. I waited to feel her grab onto my flesh but instead I felt the huge whoosh of air as she flew over me.

"Damn you Finnery O'Tooley! I'll be back for ye!" she screamed out as she flew by, wailing as she continued to scream out in Gaelic.

I continued on cowering until I could no longer hear the lament of her hellish wails. I slowly allowed myself to stand, ready to drop to my belly in case she was going to come soaring back at me. Once I was finally sure that she wasn't coming back, I brushed myself off and tugged at my jacket before I continued on my way, regaining my confidence that I had bested the banshee twice and praying to God that no one heard me cry.

Fitting In

Jennifer Ruff

She's the black sheep
standing out in the sea of white
She's the oddball, the creep
to everyone one around

She's the loner, the ghost
invisible to all
She's the ridicule of most
the joke of the town

She's a gifted soul
trapped in a body it hates
She's lost all control
lost the power to think and create

She's decided to end it
decided to go
To a place that will let her be herself
and let her true light show

She's finally free
no one judging her now
For once in her life
she fits into the crowd

Glass Petals

Lori Richey
leaded glass



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The Big Decision

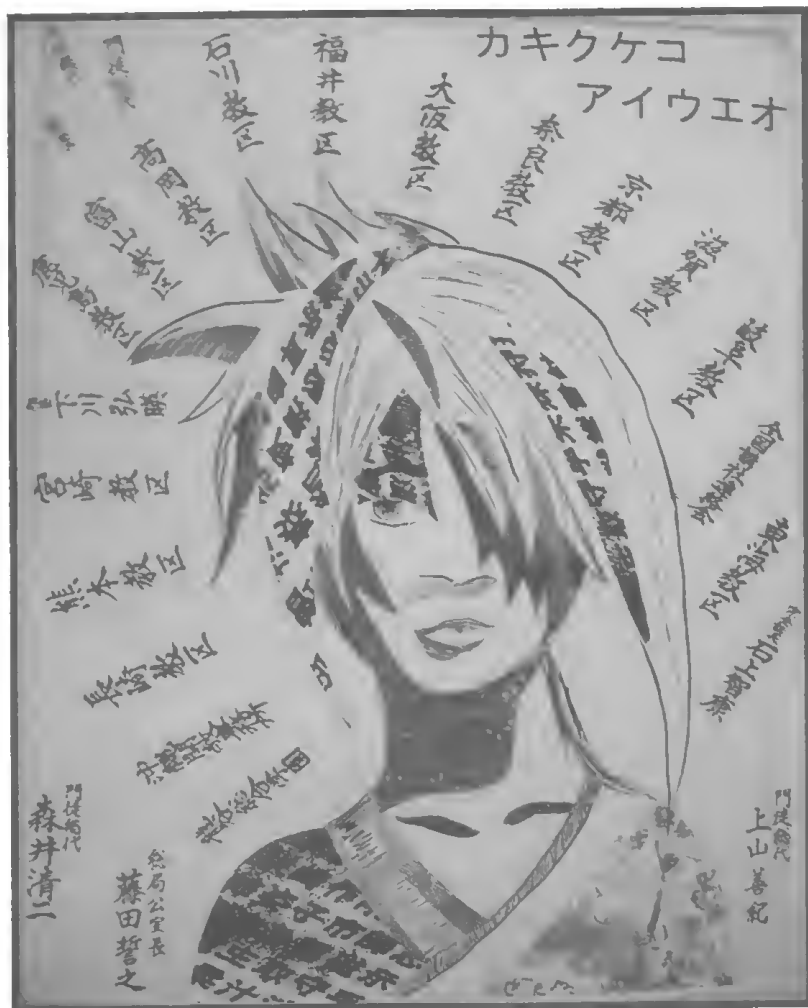
Sarah Osterfeld
photography



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Tohru Yuki

April Taber
ink collage



Pushing Through

Jessie McBroom
glazed stoneware



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Sea Turtle

Jennifer Guenin
leaded glass



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For You

Erika Lynn Rowshan

Tickling your arm on a quiet weekend drive to pick up
Papa John's Pizza
"Lovers of Loving Love" playing lightly in the background
I find myself thinking about you and me.

How did we come to be?

We met in the summer
Through your ex girlfriend and
My boss at Pizza King
Who oddly enough stole that ex of yours away...

It was a shy and awkward first meeting
Not the type you hear about in romance novels or
Fairy tales
And yet somehow we found that we belonged.

After phone conversations and games of Life among friends
The game of Life really began for us.

We talked...
We dated...
We found that there was a connection...
And we fell deeply and happily into love.

That first summer together was a whirlwind of
Many new things
There was excitement
Adventure...

Temptation...
Which after a time lead to
Contentment...
Patience...
And real love.

During the months and months of school
With a two-and-a-half-hour gap between us
We experienced different feelings in our relationship

We felt the bitter sweet feeling of seeing one another for a short weekend day
Only followed by one of us leaving for school once again

We felt the loneliness and hardships that come with being apart

And yet...we made it through that first school year
We did not break apart
We only became stronger and
Loved and appreciated each moment that we did have together

That second summer together was so sweet
So absolutely needed
So incredibly amazing
And just what we craved

We spent days and days together
Doing whatever it was that we wanted to do whether that was
Bowling
Going to a movie
Eating out
Eating in
Playing Mario Kart

Talking
Loving
Laughing
Living
Or
Simply being together
It did not matter what we did
All that mattered was that we were together

And here I sit today
In your white Chevy Cavalier
Tickling your arm while you playfully tickle me back
Quite possibly creating a traffic hazard (but we don't mind)

Here I sit today thinking about how we began
How we spent our time together
All of those little memories
Fuse together and wander about inside of my head

I smile...
Lean over...
And give you a kiss.

"I love you."

Things You Do

David Spencer

You smile when we touch
But you laugh when I dance
You cry when I leave
But you bawl when I arrive
You talk when you're upset
But you whisper when you're angry
You sigh when we fight
But you moan when we love
You kiss when you're excited
But you stare longingly when in love
You cough when you're sick
But you grimace when you're ill
You hurry when you're early
But you take your time when you're late
You look when you're afraid
But you turn away when confused
You pine when I'm gone
But you hurt when I'm there

A Flutter of Pink

Christine Schmelter

I sat in a comfortable upright leather chair as I stared at the scene of organized chaos that was unwinding before me. Huge flashes of floating pink leapt, twirled, spun, and all out ran in front of my eyes as one tall, thin woman dressed in all black rushed about, helping whoever she could, dropping down some of the levels of chaos. I watched all of these little girls flutter about in their pink tutus like dandelion seeds that were being carried away by the wind. I started to chuckle and grin at the image, and, as I glanced over at the other mothers seated all around me, I realized that I was the only one who was sharing in on the pure joy that was spreading like wildfire through the dance floor.

“Julie has been going on non-stop about becoming a prima ballerina. Sveta has even said that she shows great promise, she just needs to work on her turn-out,” I overheard one mother smugly and boastfully say to another.

I glanced over to see who was talking; my eyes immediately stopped on two women who were huddled together, both holding tightly to their grande Starbucks lattes. I immediately recognized the woman speaking as a tall, leggy blond by the name of Marie Davnors, a rich and powerful realtor who was the biggest bitch that I had ever come across and a reverent supporter to her daughter’s center-of-the-universe mentality. I didn’t know the name of the plump brunette sitting beside her, but she was the dreaded type of mother that was living vicariously through her daughter and would push her into all of the outlets that had never been open for her.

“Oh that is wonderful! She is getting so much better than when she first started. I wish Emma had that drive, she wants to play soccer instead of dance!” the other woman said woefully; obviously soccer wasn’t what she had set in place for little Emma.

Maria sympathetically squeezed her shoulder and I had to look away from the two of them before I had an urge to tell them what they could do with their future plans for their four-year-old-daughters. I sought out Emma and Julie to see what their “greatness” really entailed.

Julie looked exactly like her mother, only shorter and with a more rounded face. Her small face was screwed up in full concentration and frustration as Sveta Dijskov had her arms

wrapped around Julie's little leg, forcing it to do go through the correct motions of a tendues. Sveta, who was continuously telling Julie to stop fighting her, was biting her lip as she wavered on whether or not she should just give up on the child and move on to the next.

Emma was a skinny, tiny thing with straight black hair that had been pulled into a tight bun. She was sitting on her butt, a look of total boredom imprinted on her light brown eyes as she picked at the pink gauze of her tutu. It was very easy to tell that she would much rather be running and getting dirty out on a soccer field.

"Oh yeah, prima ballerinas my ass," I hissed under my breath.

My eyes swept back into the sitting area, flicking over the clock to see how much more time this chaos was going to ensue, but before I could see the clock, I came to meet the gaze of Marie's steel blue eyes and the brunette's worrisome green ones. I slightly jumped in my seat as the intensity of their gaze surprised me. My mind raced as I frantically tried to recall what I had said and if I had said it loud.

"I haven't seen you here too often. Who are you?" Marie asked me.

The initial shock of their gaze left me and I fixed them with a cold and calculating stare. Marie had already made up her mind about me when I had walked through the door with my daughter, wearing a pair of battered sweat pants that had the letters ABT down the leg in large white letters and a Tool hoodie that I had stolen from my husband. I was beneath her, and it was making me very nervous about why they were suddenly so interested in me.

"I'm usually not able to come and watch, my husband usually brings her, but I was able to get some time off of work. My name is Chris," I told them.

A horrified look overcame the brunette's face when I said that my husband watched the rehearsals, but an interested and lust filled look came on to Marie's face, making me want to throw her down to the ground and start pummeling her.

"Your husband... how... nice," Marie purred. The sound of Sveta yelling out Julie's name made that lust filled look drip from Marie's face as a look of horror and disgust quickly marred her pretty features. I couldn't help but laugh and smile as Sveta sent Julie to another corner of the room to work on her tendues exercises alone.

"It looks to me that her prima ballerina days may be a pipe dream," I told them both, not caring one bit about my words.

Marie looked as if she had been slapped and the brunette turned ashen white. "What did you just say?" Marie demanded with a hiss.

"Most prima ballerinas are child prodigies. They have these basic skills mastered by this age. If Julie is struggling to do a simple tendues, then the rest of the exercises are going to eat her alive," I said with a shrug.

Marie suddenly looked to me how the cartoon Medusas always looked: hate en-gorged, red eyes with rage just exuding from every pore with deadly weapons waving out of her head. "My daughter can be and will be a damn prima ballerina, you damned tramp! Since you're so smug and so perfect, who the hell is your daughter?! She the one in the corner picking her nose and her tights?!"

I glared at her and shook my head as I burst out laughing. Usually, whenever someone tried to cut down my child I would be all over them like a feral wild cat, but I knew that my little kitty Kat would do a much better job than me at making this woman eat each and every one of her words.

"She's the one in the middle of the front row," I found myself purring as I pointed her way, laughing at the way that the two women snapped their heads around to catch a glimpse of Kat.

Kat stood in the center of the front row, staring intently at her own reflection. Her long golden blond curls hung down to the center of her back, still held by a thread by the ponytail holder that only an hour ago had held all of those curls up in a tight bun. She was standing in a tight and correct first position, her turnout tilting her feet out at the forty five degree angles that most beginners are never able to get to in the first couple of months of dancing. She bent down into a grande plies and then she lifted up her heels, standing tall in a first position relevee. All of the other girls were struggling hard with this position, only being able to hold it for a few seconds before their legs began to wobble and they fell back onto their heels, or in the case of Emma, flat on their butt. Sveta glanced over at Kat, took note of her formation and her technique, and made a small comment to her before Kat flowed back down into a petit plies and then back into first position. Sveta gave her a genuine smile as she patted Kat on the head, laughing as the ponytail holder finally gave up its struggles and it flung halfway across the room. Kat noticed me watching and she started jumping up and down, a huge grin on her face as she waved her arm at me, mimicking exactly the motions of a humming bird.

I glanced back at Marie and the brunette and I couldn't help but burst out laughing at the sight of them. The brunette was looking as if she had just found a new idol and Marie

had her mouth dropped open wide.

"Th...at...t...t...s your daughter?" Marie stammered.

"Yup," I said with a happy grin, my pride of my daughter spilling into my tone.

"That's my baby."

At that moment, Kat bound up to me, moving faster than the other girls. She started to chatter away in a frenzied excitement as she pulled on a baggy hoodie that read: "ABT Future Star" across the front.

"How is she that good?! You're nothing but a poorly dressed tramp that lets her husband sit in on her daughter's class! How is that possible?!" Marie said to me, attacking me again so she could try to regain the power in the situation.

Kat whipped her small head around and she fixed Marie with a hate filled glare, a glare that was all me. "Momma was a ballet star. She's the best dancer in the world!" Kat snapped, sounding as if she were telling a fact that everyone knew.

"I danced with American Ballet Theatre until bad knees forced me into retirement. And as a former prima ballerina, your daughter's technique is total crap, so quit deluding and indulging her - and your daughter is miserable; let her play soccer. Quit being socialites and stop the vicarious living because that's the reason that my husband refers to you as the 'frigid bitches,'" I spat out.

"Mom! You're doing it again," Kat told me, jerking my hand.

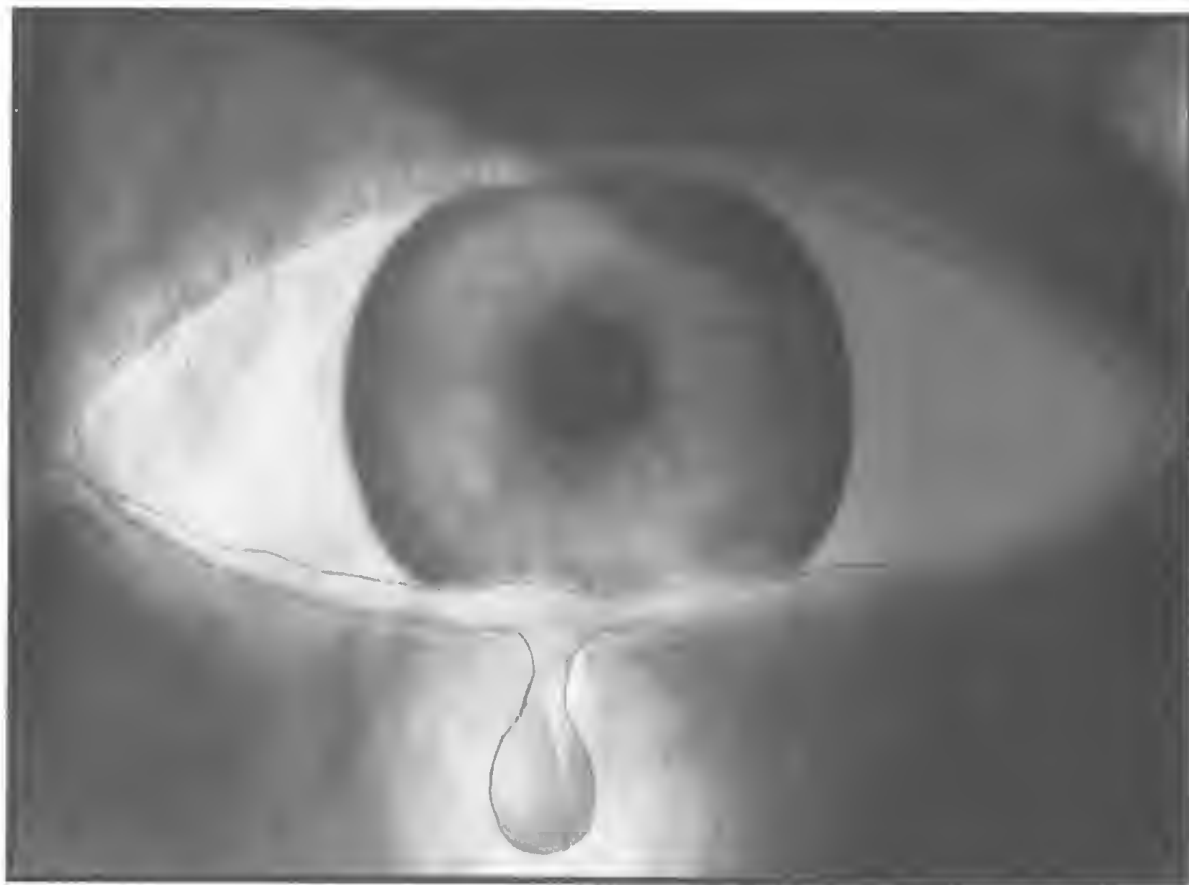
I grinned down at her, feeling the waves of burning hatred that were being aimed at me by both women as they moved their mouths around like fish out of water.

"Sorry Kitty Kat, let's get out of here before I do something dumb," I told her.

"That's why Daddy said you should never be allowed to come; you can't make friends with other mommas! That's okay cuz you're better than all them anyway!"

Hope

Elizabeth Bessette
charcoal



Untitled

Aaron Thomas
pencil



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Cat and Mouse

Melissa Klahn & Christine Schmelter

Shamus James could sense his daughter's panic the moment he had left the small little convenience store he had stopped in to get a loaf of bread for that night. He had left her sitting on a bench a couple of doors down from the store, advising her to stay put, and scream if something happened. It had just turned dark, and the moon was shining above all of the buildings in the town. Many of the street lights had yet to turn on, and the street was a looming empty passageway.

As he raced to the bench he had left her at, Shamus' panic level rose when he realized that his daughter was no longer there. He cursed himself for being stupid enough to think that she would actually stay put. Livinia was much like him with her constant need to explore any new area, and usually he would have been perfectly fine accepting her curious nature, but, on that night, he knew that they had been followed. He didn't think that leaving her alone for a few minutes would have been a problem, but that was what he got for not thinking. He looked around the area frantically searching for his young daughter. There were plenty of storefronts to choose from, but if Shamus knew his daughter as much as he thought he did, he knew her interests fell more on the darkened alleyways that surrounded the small street. As he walked from alley to alley, his hope of finding her anywhere was beginning to fade. She couldn't have gotten all the way down the main street. As he stopped in front of the last alley near the small grocery store, he stopped in pure horror and panic at the sight in front of him: his daughter was in the grasp of a man he knew all too well.

Killian Garanshi was one of the most viscous and blood thirsty vampires ever created; living longer than many, he was considered one of the first fledgling vampires of the ancients. His years on the earth had to be in the near thousands, and the number of hunters he had killed in his time attested to how powerful he was. Shamus knew that Killian was after his daughter. Killian had a strange infatuation with her. They had been running from him for years. He assumed it had a lot to do with how much she resembled her mother. Killian had captured, raped, tortured, and viciously killed Brea James to the point where she was unrecognizable when her body was thrown upon Shamus' doorstep with a note proclaiming Livinia was next. Ever since then, the two had been running and training for the fight that

would either end Killian's immortal life or kill Livinia.

Shamus had been teaching Livinia about hunting vampires since she was old enough to hold onto a blade, and now seeing her in the grasp of this creature, Shamus panicked. Killian held her like she was a newborn child, his raven feather hair hiding the evil red flames that were his eyes. Shamus could see his fangs hovering above his daughter's neck and his talon like fingers running through her head of black hair.

"Shamus, you spent so much time running from me and hiding your daughter from me, and you leave her sitting alone on a bench? Your worry has turned to stupidity," Killian's Germanic voice hissed in his direction.

Shamus froze, not letting his body language tell Killian anything. His eyes locked onto Livinia and they reassured her with just a glance.

"Let go of her Killian. Take me instead," he said to him.

Killian took one look at Shamus, and then he turned his attention back onto Livinia. He glanced back and forth between the two several times before he burst out laughing. His laughter threw off Shamus, made him lose his mental armor, letting loose the fear that he was feeling.

"What kind of a trade is that? An old, used up has-been or a fresh young child. Hh-hmm, let me consider my options. Your fear betrays that look of confused strength, Shamus. You really should work on controlling your fear; it's the reason I am here now. Ever since I killed your wife, your fear has been a trail for me, and now you leave your sweet, innocent, little child alone on a street. It was so easy to trick her, too. Have you not taught her anything? She heard screaming and came running to the rescue of an eighty-year-old woman who was dead before she even got here," Killian stated in a mocking growl as he nodded his head towards the corpse of someone's grandma or wife.

A surge of anger and pride rushed through Shamus as he took a huge step forward, but Killian jerked his hand tighter around Livinia's neck, making her cry out loudly. Shamus forced himself to be still.

"Killian, stop! Let me take her place!" Shamus screamed again, tears welling up in his eyes, spilling down onto his cheeks. He hated the fact that he was doing this, crying in front of Killian, but he couldn't stop himself or help himself. His only child was being waved around in front of him like she was a doll, and there was nothing that he could do about it.

Killian was quickly growing bored with the whole situation. He grinned at Shamus,

barring his fangs, letting him see them glisten in the moonlight. He let go of Livinia, laughing as she fell to the ground with a plop. Shamus made a move to rush to her, but Killian was faster. Before Shamus even knew what hit him, Killian was on him, throwing him down onto the ground. Shamus let out a loud shriek of pain as Killian's razor sharp fangs pierced Shamus' throat. He drank and drank, tearing at Shamus' throat, taking all of his blood in three large gulps. Killian pulled his teeth out of the man's throat and then he picked up his lifeless body, throwing it several feet in front of him. He licked his lips greedily as he stared down at the cowering child before him. Shamus was only the appetizer to his hunger, little Livinia James would be the delicious dinner and sweet desert that he had been craving for years.

Livinia sat in front of Killian, her eyes wide and her mouth open in complete shock and fear. It all had happened so fast, faster than she had time to comprehend what had just occurred. After a few minutes, her brain finally realized what she had just witnessed, and all she could do was open her mouth and scream for the loss of her final parent. Within seconds, Killian was on top of her.

"Don't scream little girl, this will all be over before you have even realized what has happened. Daddy couldn't protect you, and no one else will be able to, so no sense in ruining my meal on account of your screaming," Killian hissed into her ear as he ran his tongue along the edge of her neck until he found her main artery, pumping with such sweet and young blood. While he prepared himself to drink from her, she tried to pry herself away from the monster her father had taught her so many times to fear. His only response was to laugh against her neck, before his fangs cut their way through delicate flesh and veins.

Killian lapped at her blood like it was a drink of precious wine, savoring the euphoric feeling he was gaining from such young blood. His own mind was on such a high he didn't feel her plunge the blade into his stomach until it was in to its hilt. He hissed in pain as he dropped the child's body to the ground and pulled the blade from his stomach, realizing it was made of pure silver and the wound was not instantly healing. He looked down at the girl, and she gave him a look to say she had gotten him. She then took off running out of the alley.

You may have gotten away from me now child, but I will always be in the back of your mind, and I will always find you. Enjoy your small victory over me because it will be your last. Soon enough you will join your pathetic family in death. Killian's voice whispered

across her mind. She shook her head angrily as she ran for her life. She knew from that day on, the vision of Killian Garanshi would always be in the back of her mind haunting her, just as she would always be on his flesh. It was a twisted game of cat and mouse that the two would always play until the point where one of them ended up losing.

Muse

David Spencer

You hover over my pencil like a bully
Every time I try to create, you pick on me
Insults thrown with the velocity of hailstones
Shattering my confidence into twenty-six pieces
Where were you at my most pressing times?
It's as if you only show up to laugh
As if these feelings I'm having are funny
But I have never been more serious in my life
When I say that I love her
And you will not change that
I only want to merge art with life
Can the two learn to be friends?
At my highest moments, it seems they cannot
But when I'm feeling low
It sucks all the candor I have
Sucks it right out of me
Our language was meant to sulk
And to walk through the rain
With its head down
But that's not me
Give me a word, then, to express this feeling I have
When I first wake up
And I know that today is going to be a good day
Because I know that she is out there

This is Like a Poem

David Spencer

Our relationship hums like a bird
And our words sound like the ocean
The birds fly like the planes
And this war is just like the last one

This metaphor is like a broken record
And this tale is like a cliché
This life is like an anecdote
And this suffering is like an orgasm

That death is like this birth
And this smile is like that tree branch
This wind is like that star
And this Earth is like that rock

That ant is like a human
And that lover is like a virus
This hate is like survival
And this love is like death

A sound is like a light
And a word is like a soul
A sight is like a story
And a poem is like a mark

Everything is like everything
But nothing is like you
See the struggle of every living thing
And you'll see the relationship, too

Spirit in the Sky

Stephanie Sonderman
leaded glass



Up and Down

Michael Crowthers
plaster and wood



Measure
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You Never Loved Me

Melissa Klahn

Melora Randall and Kylin Reeves were the perfect couple by any account. As teenagers, they had fallen in love, went to college together, and had a set of twins all within their first ten years of being together. Many saw them as the picture of perfection, and maybe they had been at some point, but, as time went on, Melora seemed to wonder more and more if Kylin really loved her.

After Kylin had graduated from law school, he had started his own firm and had been involved in several high profile cases. He worked late hours and was rarely ever home. His once healthy physique made stronger by frequent trips to the gym and health bars had gained a few pounds since his college days, and his hair was slowly starting to thin as he came closer to thirty. Melora sensed the change in her husband almost as soon as she had the twins. She had never really wanted kids, but she would do anything to make Kylin happy. Sadly, the twins turned out to be girls and he couldn't have been any less interested if he tried.

After her mistake in bearing him female children, she decided the next step would be to improve on her appearance. When he told her he liked dark hair better than her own blonde locks, she had immediately bought the dye to turn her hair into the inky black it was now. She worked out constantly to lose the weight she had gained while she was pregnant, and yet Kylin still came home later and later. She knew about all of the little power hungry secretaries that worked for Kylin during the day while Melora stayed at home with the children. She had seen their lipstick on his collar numerous times, and yet she still felt the need to do everything completely right for him. She wanted to make him happy and wanted to make her marriage work. It had been ten years since they had gotten together, and on their anniversary, she had planned the perfect dinner.

While Kylin was at the office she had cleaned the house, sent the twins to a babysitter, and cooked Kylin's favorite dinner and dessert, all in hopes of impressing him. When she had told him to be home at six that night, he had seemed understanding and surprisingly excited. When six o'clock finally rolled around, she didn't start to worry, but instead blamed him being late on traffic. After ten o'clock rolled around and she had put her beautiful roasted chicken dinner away, he had finally shown up. She had huffed past him angrily to go pick

up his children and had returned home to find him asleep in bed with his work clothes still on. He hadn't even bothered to say hello to her or wait to fall asleep until she had gotten home.

She was now sitting in front of her vanity brushing out her waist-length hair from her shower and staring at him in the background as she looked into the mirror. He was lying on his stomach with his face turned away from her. She assumed it was another way for him to not look at her and pretend like she really wasn't there.

"I asked you to come home at six tonight Kylin. Tonight was so special to me and you couldn't show up on time just once," she hissed as fresh tears began to form in her eyes. She blinked them away, however, not willing to cry anymore over him. She waited to hear a response but got none. She hated when he ignored her; it made her want to scream sometimes.

"Fine, don't answer me. This room is filthy, you know that. I spent so much time cleaning the house today to make it perfect for you, and you throw things all over the place." She was becoming angrier every second he didn't respond to her. She sighed as she stood up and smoothed down the front of her violet silk robe. Underneath it, she had put on a black corset and garter set that she had planned to wear for him to make him forget about the lipstick jungle that he worked in. He would probably never even see it that night. As she began to pick up clothing off the floor, she picked up the red dress she had been wearing earlier to reveal a dark stain in the carpet and a broken wine glass. She didn't even remember breaking the glass. The liquid would more than likely stain the white carpet, which meant she would have to buy new carpet for their bedroom. She hissed as she began to pick up the glass on the floor and her ruined dress. She must have used the dress to clean up the spot, but she realized that no amount of cleaning was going to get red wine out of carpet. As she finished picking up the pieces, she stood and stared at her husband. She knew he was faking sleep. She could tell by the stiffness in his body. She knew when he slept, he was relaxed and calm; it was the only time she felt close to her own husband, when she could wrap her arms around him and pretend like they were happily married.

"I'm going to put the rest of dinner away and check on the twins. If you decide to stop brooding and want to eat, I will be down stairs." With that she left the bedroom and walked down the stairs to their kitchen. There was a knife in the sink as well as a couple of other broken glasses.

I don't even remember breaking those or using that, she thought to herself as she threw the glass in her hand away along with the dress. That was one thing about Kylin: the

more he ignored their marriage, the more he bought her expensive dresses and jewelry to make up for it. She finished cleaning by putting the rest of the broken glasses in the garbage.

You should put that knife in there, too; you'll never get that one clean.

It's only food from dinner; nothing to worry about. A good scrubbing will get that cleaned.

No it won't, no matter how hard you try to be the little homemaker, your wife skills are lacking. He wouldn't be exploring his options if you would just try harder. You're so lazy. He works so hard for you, and you can't even let him have his late night meetings or his sleep.

I am a damn good wife: he just doesn't realize it. He doesn't love me like he used to. That's because he never loved you, sweetheart. You were just a gullible little trophy to keep on his mantle until he hit the big leagues. You aren't even on his radar anymore. You need to get out of here before he gets rid of you. It's only a matter of time before he finds a newer model of you. One who will fulfill all his fantasies.

"No stop it, you two don't know what you're talking about," Melora hissed as she rinsed the knife off and placed it back in the kitchen's knife drawer.

"Mommy, why are you screaming?" a female voice asked from the doorway in front of Melora. She looked down to see her daughter Lea standing there looking exhausted and confused. Melora smiled at her daughter as best as she could before wiping her hands on her robe and picking the child up.

"Mommy wasn't screaming, sweetheart; you must have heard me wrong. Let's get you back to bed. Is your sister up?" Melora asked her as she carried her daughter back to her bedroom. She couldn't care less if her other daughter had run away to the circus as long as she was no longer bothering her to braid her hair or pick out her outfit for school or, heaven forbid, feed her.

"Laya is still sleeping, Mommy. Did Daddy come home?" Melora rolled her eyes as she brought Lea back in her bedroom. Laya was still asleep on the bottom bunk of their beds. No matter what she did for her brat children, it was never enough: they always wanted their father, never her. It was just one more reason she found to hate him more.

"Yes, and he is asleep like you should be. You have preschool in the morning. Now here's your bed, get back to sleep. Mommy will wake you up in a few more hours," she replied with the best fake smile she could muster. Lea nodded once as she gave her mom a hug

and climbed into the bed from her arms. Melora pulled Lea's blankets around her and exited the room. She then turned out the remaining lights in the house before returning upstairs to her bedroom.

"I knew you would still be asleep. I'm so sick of this, Kylin. You don't care about this marriage, you don't care about this family, and you don't care about me!" Melora hissed, her voice becoming louder with each word. She hated him so much for everything he had put her through the past ten years. She hated him for asking her to marry him when he didn't love her and to leave college to have his children. She had been perfectly content living in coexistence with him before they had placed rings around each other's fingers. There had been a time when they were once happy, and now she could no longer even stand to look at him. She glared at his unmoving form on the bed and walked over to him, trying to wake him from whatever form of sleep he was in. He seemed to have red wine all over the front of his shirt, causing her to become even angrier for ruining her satin sheets she had just bought for three hundred dollars.

"How could you get into bed with that shirt on? You ruined my bed, the bed I paid for with my own money. I'm so tired of this, Kylin. I'm leaving for good this time. I swear to God I am leaving for good," she screamed, walking over to her dresser and pulling off the robe she had been wearing. She had every intention of getting dressed and simply walking out on her life with him and the demons she had created with little help from him.

Don't do this, Melora; he still loves you he's just tired. Get back into bed. Be the good wife. Things may be tough now, but what kind of wife would you be for leaving your husband? I would hate you for leaving him. You would be all alone.

It would be worth it, though. You would have your own life again. He'll never love you again. He's too busy with the office tramps to worry about his little trophy wife and daughters. Just get dressed and stop worrying about him. He won't even hear you leaving. You failed as a wife. You couldn't even produce the children he wanted. You are pathetic and worthless to him. You won't be alone; I'll always be here. Get rid of the worthless asshole and come with me. We'll leave together. I've always wanted to leave my husband

"Stop yelling at me, both of you. I just need a good night's sleep, is all. I can think more clearly in the morning," Melora finally yelled as she pulled out one of her nightgowns and replaced the outfit she had been wearing. She tossed the clothing back into her undergarment drawer and walked over to her side of the bed. She got in slowly and pulled the covers

over herself. She would feel so much better in the morning. She curved her own body shape into the side of her husband's, wrapping her leg and arm around him like she did most nights. He felt strangely cold to her, but she just assumed it was because he didn't have blankets over him, he would be warm soon enough, she just needed to warm him up. Even after wrapping herself around him, she still didn't seem to receive a response.

The man she loved so much was completely lost to her, she began to realize. Everything she had meant nothing. She was his trophy just like her good friend had said. Her friends were the only thing keeping her sane anymore. They were always there when she needed them. Kylin was never there; he was too busy training his new office whore to ever be there for her. She sighed as she sat up slightly. She sneered at his unmoving body and hunched forward towards his ear.

"You never loved me," she whispered as she laid back down and wrapped herself around him again. She soon fell into the same deep sleep her husband was in. She could clearly see her revenge it was all plotted out in her head. She would get rid of him and the worthless relationship she called a marriage. She would be done with her friends and her demon spawn and everything else that meant nothing to her. As her own body began to grow cold she thanked God for creating sleeping pills as well as the quiet calm and peace she was now feeling.

Swollen Monotony

Angela Potticary

Take me away from here, this place of swollen monotony. I will take only what I need; we can leave the rest behind. I cannot bear to go through the motions of every day and every hour any longer. My screams beckon to be heard, to be released from the depths of my belly, shaking the earth as they rise. When you hear them - as they pierce your ears - you will know exactly what you need to do.

Together we will run far, far away. To another world we will go. We will find a place without watches or clocks or calendars on the walls. Time will be measured by the sun and the moon and the seasons, not by metal cuffs that tick and beep or halogen lights and numbered pieces of paper that show a different picture of cute little animals with each passing day.

We will wake up to the sun's warmth beckoning us to enjoy the new day. We will rise to the sights, smells, and sounds of God's country, not "man's" country. Life will be about new experiences and new discoveries, not about meetings and deadlines. Every day will be different, never the same.

Take me to Africa. Take me to Asia. Take me to the moon. Just please take me away from here. I am standing in a crowded room screaming at the top of my lungs, but no one hears me. No one acknowledges my cries. No one stops what they are doing to stare at the disruption in the middle of their swollen monotony. No one but you. Let's go now before we're caught in the drone again. Otherwise, we are as good as dead.

Pee Wee

Stephanie Sonderman
pencil



Impact

Ryan Preston

inspired by Michael Crowthers' ink sketch
acrylic



Measure
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The Principle of the Matter

Christine Schmelter

It's true: you can only push a person so far before they snap, and those two children pushed me way beyond my pushing limits. They burst into my life, abusing me and all of the things that I had to give them, and how do they repay me? They put me in an oven, that's how they repay! I did everything to make those little brats happy and comfortable, and in return for my kindness, I'm the evil hag! Well, enough of this falsehood! I am here to set the records straight, to get some sort of justice, and to bring back the perfect reputation that they destroyed. Those kids were evil, and they destroyed me, and now I want to destroy them. I'm getting ahead of myself; I should start at the beginning.

In the tiny village that I live in, I am the village witch. Now, I know what you're thinking: "Burn the witch!" "She's evil!" "She deserved whatever those kids did to her!" But that is far from the truth; I'm a valued citizen in my village. I'm on the town council, I heal people, help them with whatever ails them, and I make the best beauty products at affordable prices.

I live on the edge of the village, right in front of the huge forest. My house is small, but it's made entirely out of candy so that the village children can have sweets whenever they feel. My house is a favorite stopping place for all the children - even some of the adults.

That horribly fateful day started out like any other: I dropped off my products to the various stores and stopped to check up on some of my patients. After doing all of my errands in town, I skipped back to my home, ready to put my feet up and play with my kittens. I noticed that none of the village children were eating my house, but two children, two that I had never seen before were nibbling at my shingles.

"Hello, children! Are you new in town?" I asked them both in one of my sweetest voices.

The little boy dropped the shingle he was eating and it shattered into a million crumbs. He jabbed at his sister and they spoke excitedly in a hushed language that I didn't understand.

"We were left in the woods by our father. Our stepmother hated us," he said.

This immediately brought tears to my eyes. "Oh, you poor dears! Come inside and I will make you feel loved!" I told them both. I tried to hug them both, but they pushed me aside and burst into my home. I was thrown off a little by this, but I took it as a sign of their abuse and shrugged it off. I went into my home, and I was shocked at what I saw. The little girl was chasing after my poor kittens, holding a lit candle low to their tiny bodies. She laughed hysterically and evilly as she ran, laughing harder when the poor things would squeal in pain. The boy was rummaging through all of my spell books, breaking bottles and setting various animals and bits free.

"Children, please, stay away from my spell things, and, my dear, you need to be gentle with the kittens. Would you like me to make some toys for you both?" I asked them sweetly.

The boy threw down a bottle, one that contained a spirit that I had spent months trying to pull out of a poor woman's toilet. I cringed when I saw the spirit float up to the ceiling with a taunting yell. The girl yanked on a kitten tail and they both stared up at me with hostile eyes.

"No, we don't want your stupid toys! We want you to leave and give us this house!" the girl declared.

A surge of anger ripped through my body. "You will never get this house! You can live with me, but this is my house," I declared.

The boy said something to his sister and then he looked at me again. "Whatever you say, Ms. Witch," he said, as sweet as candy.

There was something about his tone that made me cautious. I led them into the kitchen, making sure that I kept my third eye fixed firmly on them. They calmly sat at the table, smiling false smiles while they graciously ate whatever I put in front of them.

"Could you make us some bread?" the girl asked, finishing the last of her milk.

"Of course I can!" I told her, my earlier anger towards them slowly starting to disappear. Maybe they were just trying to test me earlier.

I went over to the oven and started to get it hot and ready. As soon as I opened that door, the little beasts shoved me in there as hard as they could and they slammed the door shut. I began to scream and shout as the oven got hot and the flames began to reach where I was. The children looked in and laughed as the flames engulfed me, scorching my beautiful

body and long white-blond hair. I called up all of my power, and I rocketed out of that fiery hell like a person being shot out of a cannon. The boy stared on in absolute shock and the girl froze in terror. I made twenty crabs appear, all underneath their bottoms. The children began to scream and cry as the crabs pinched them, running right out the door.

And there you have it. All I did was defend myself and my home, and I'm an evil witch. So disregard everything that you have read about me. I am not an ugly old hag. I am not an evil, Hell-spawned demon, and I surely don't eat children. I'm a good and beautiful witch, just as long as you don't push me too far. And then, if you do, well, I can't be helped for what I do to save myself.

Fear of a Daughter

Melissa Klahn

Compared to a train wreck
I am a work of art
Compared to a house fire
I am illuminating
Compared to a murderer
I am complete innocence
Compared to others by you
I am nothing
For you have made me this way
Eyes, intelligence, body
All compared to others
Nothing more than averagely ugly and obscene
Compared to others by you
I am useless
Compared to my mother by you
I am just like her
Compared to you by me
I am my mother's daughter

Driving in the Rain

Danielle Marshall

I drove out of the school parking lot wanting the world to speed by. I maintained my cool long enough to get through the town limits close to the speed limit.

My foot pressed hard against the gas pedal as the tears began to fall. I couldn't feel anything but the growing coldness inside me. What color might have been in my face had long since faded into chalky pallor.

The torrents of rain didn't slow my furious drive. The speed and tears blurred my vision, causing the lights to melt into whirlpools of color.

When had I, Nikki, the stoic hearted, become an emotional wreck?

I turned onto a deserted country road. No one was in sight. I ignored the stop signs, gaining momentum as I went. I wanted the end, so much, right then. No more wild emotions tearing apart my life. In one moment, I would be free.

I saw the electrical pole at the side of the road. I turned the wheel, quickly aiming for it. I came close, very close, but at the last possible moment something made me turn away. I tried again to hit the next pole, but still I drove away. Images kept flashing in my mind. I wanted the end, but the images caused a deeper and more heartfelt need.

I couldn't do it any longer. The images were coming too many, too fast. I slowed down and pulled over to the side of the road. Rain pelted my windshield, but I no longer saw the real world anymore.

I was so tired. My eyelids kept drooping. I couldn't focus on my homework. I had too much to do. Marching Band practice was taking up my afternoons and nights. I didn't have time for it all. Essays every other week to turn in for my English Comp class. College applications to write. Trigonometry and AP Biology problems to work on. I thank the powers that be that I took Art class this year. I stayed up past twelve trying to finish it all. Then my alarm went off at 5:45, but I wouldn't hear it until 6:30. I have to drive in the mornings now, too. I'm an accident waiting to happen.

All I needed to do was relax more and prioritize better. But I had so little time for it all. Band was taking up a lot of my time. It was my last year, and, for the first time, I was really starting to hate it.

We all stood there listening to our director yell and complain about our lack of concentration. My mind was no longer focused on him. I glared at him with so much hate and pain. I felt as if I could send daggers through every part of his body.

A plan was formulating in my mind. I wanted the yelling to end. I wanted the responsibility for my section to no longer exist. I was going to kill myself on my way home. No one would really care. I doubted my section would care for long that I was gone. Some would be angry--they would have to replace my hole in the drill. A few friends would probably care. But, I had made up my mind. Nothing good was going to come from existing in this world.

My depressions are typical. I hate and loathe the people that bring me down. I disconnect myself from my friends and family. Even those I wish to share with, I push away. I feel that I can protect myself from the pain if no one else knows. But we need to share the suffering, or it just eats us alive.

Together, my crush Chase and I sat watching a movie at my house. I loved being close to him, but I didn't know how to express myself. I've never been good at that, verbally at least. There was so much I wanted to tell him and so much I wanted to do with him. But I didn't know what he wanted. I was afraid. So afraid that if I told him, I might lose him. But, I think, I was even more afraid of him liking me as much as I liked him. If not more. I don't know how to share myself.

The band and I had just finished performing at one of our county's schools. Before we even performed, I was distraught, but afterwards, well, I was in ruin. It was possibly my worst performance, but for most of the others, it was their "best." Listening to our director afterwards made me distressed. I couldn't concentrate. I felt horrible.

Earlier that day we had been at another competition. Most everyone thought it was his or her best performance. But we were up against the better bands in our class. We lost, but we felt as if we had won.

After changing out of our uniforms, I went with my friend and her boyfriend to grab something to eat and sat down beneath the tent before heading to the stands to watch the other bands perform. I saw Chase wandering around with some of his friends, but they disappeared up into the stands. I wanted to be with him, but I didn't know where to look for him.

A few minutes later, my friend and I were sitting in the stands looking for her boyfriend who had disappeared sometime prior. As I looked up into the masses, I saw Chase with a girl we had met on a band trip. She was from another school in our county and was also a

member of another marching band.

Seeing him with her ripped open my heart. I was jealous, and I wasn't used to it. I wanted to sit with him. I wanted him to be near me, warming me up. But Chase was up there. With her.

Lightning forked across the sky bringing me back to the present. I shivered with cold and self-pity. I hated these feelings and visions, but they weren't finished yet.

I can see myself weeks, months, maybe even years later with Chase (or was it someone else?). Just spending time with each other. Watching a movie and making out. Just the pleasure of being with him makes me smile.

A scene of a book signing passed across my vision. I sat at the table, a published and celebrated author, signing one of my books. Tears welled up again, but the vision remained clear and perfect. My ultimate goal accomplished.

I can see myself walking down an aisle in a large, flowing, ivory dress, a bouquet in my hands. Before me stands a priest and the man I'm going to marry. I can't see his face but I don't think I really want to. Not knowing fuels my hope.

I'm happy and successful with my own family. I'm growing old with my love. I see my children growing up and having children of their own. I see myself with my entire family during the holidays, so happy, reminiscing. I'm meeting once a month with my best friends, old and new, to catch up and remember. We're so close. I don't know what I would do without them.

Then a vision much closer to the present comes to me. My friends and family are standing over my casket. They're crying or attempting to hide their sadness. I see them weeks later talking about what happened, wishing they could have done something to help. They grow older and remember constantly about what I did. They can't let go. They feel guilty for what I did.

My tears continued to fall. I didn't want them to feel guilty for whatever I may do. Hope began to flourish inside me. I could have everything I wanted if I would just keep going. I wanted my friendships. I wanted my books published. I wanted a family and a life of my own with the person that I love.

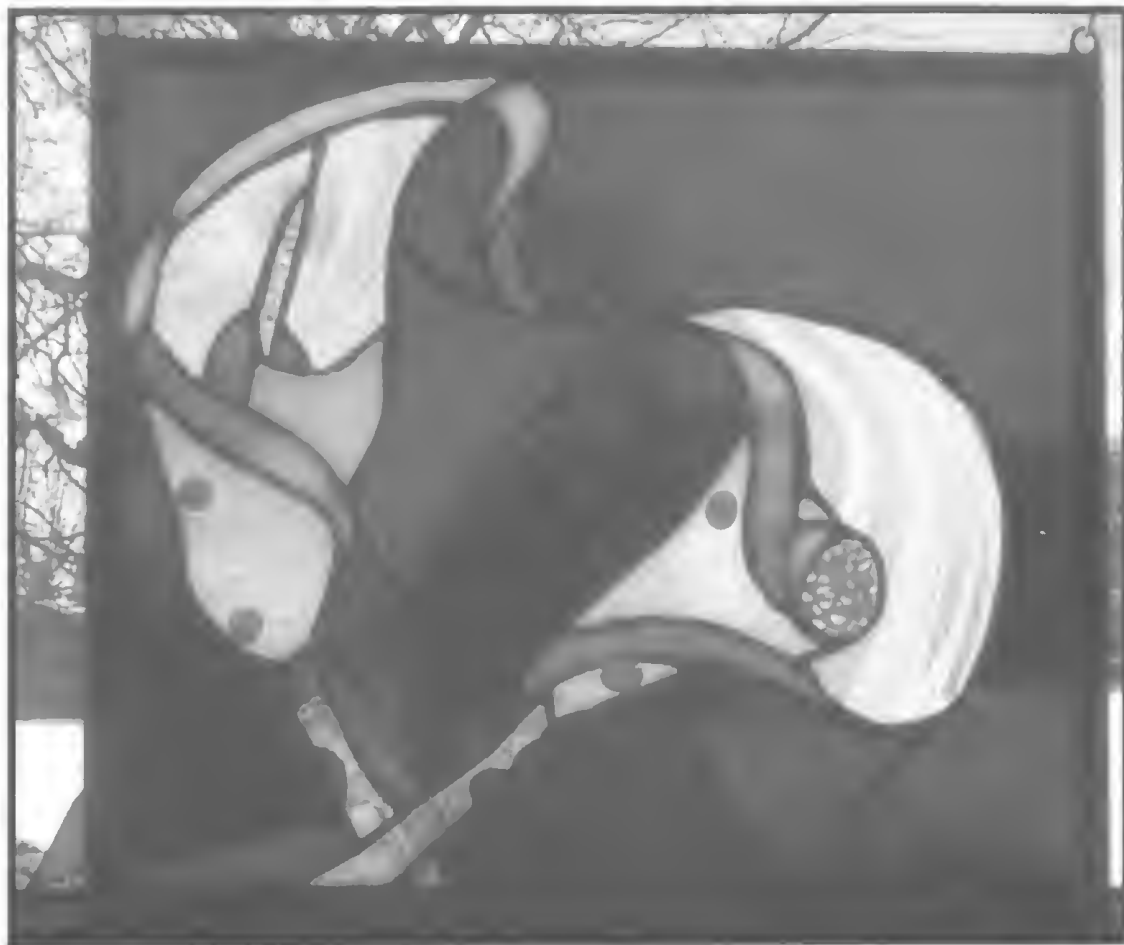
I started to smile. There was so much I still had to live for. I had my future. I had my friends. I had my family.

I dried the tears off my cheeks and started driving again. I arrived home and gave my

mom and dad a hug. They were perplexed but I just left them standing there trying to figure out why I had hugged them.

Elegant Courtship

Stephanie Sonderman
copper foiled glass



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Surfer Rosa

Sarah Kitterman
pencil



Measure
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Chicago Skyline from the Observatory

Nicole Lenzo
photography



Measure
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Flames

Monica Katich
charcoal



Measure
Page 113

Untitled

Jessica Lamping

I miss my old disciples
Oh, if they could see me now
The once high-praised leader
Is now scrounging to survive
Once I had many listeners
People would gather just for me
Now I just get sidelong glances
Occasionally a nod
How is it that all my followers
Left to follow someone else?
I've got no one to listen
To my spiteful sermons
I barely listen anymore
I doubt it really matters
I miss my old disciples
I wish to see them now
I'm sure they all are doing well
Listening to another preach
I don't think I'm a bad person
I probably just got carried away
People made me think I was
Much better than I really am
It's hard to continue being humble
When people build you up so much
I think I was a good leader
Very few complained
Not that I acknowledged criticism

It just didn't seem important
I miss my old disciples
Do you think they miss me too?

Untitled

Allen Dean

"So tell me about this woman," said the old woman sitting opposite me. I was referred to her after losing my wife - the top executives thought I needed a little help coping with the loss. But what do they know, what could they know about losing someone like that?

"Well, what do you want to know?" I replied, lost in thought. I had been lost ever since that night.

"Just tell me about her, anything you can think of," she replied smugly. Oh, how I wish I could reach across the table and smack that smart ass little look off of her face.

"Well," I said, "I might as well start from the beginning."

"I remember seeing her for the first time at a concert. I played in a little band a while back, and she came to a show. She stood out among the crowd. She was beautiful, my God was she gorgeous, like a diamond among lumps of coal, like a light in the dark. She had long hair, blonde as blonde could be. Since then, she has changed it numerous times, each one as beautiful as the last. But the most captivating piece of her wonderful anatomy was her eyes. Well, her eyes and her smile. She had big green eyes, so captivating, like deep forest pools reflecting green light back into themselves. Her smile was so inviting and warm, she made me feel like the most important person in the world. But I remember coming out and spotting her, then not being able to take my eyes off of her for the rest of the show. Always she was there in the corner of my eye. Afterward, we began to talk, and it blossomed into the most wonderful thing in my life. She was my everything, the center of my world, and the love of my life. Everyday I would wake to her beautiful face and be breathless. Even after so many years, she was stunning."

"That's very nice, you obviously loved her very much," she said still in her glib little tone.

"Yeah, it was nice," I said dripping with sarcasm. "You have no idea, do you? You go home to your husband and your big expensive house and everything is fine! I go home to an empty house every night. I dream about just holding her; I dream of just looking into her eyes, but every time I wake up, I'm hit all over again with the fact that she is never coming back. NEVER!" I began to cry, then, overwhelmed with the memory of all those sleepless

nights, hoping she would just walk back in the door. Hoping that it all was a dream, and I would wake up to her in my arms and be able to kiss her again, be able to hear her again. "What do you know? You'll never understand what I had, no one can."

"I have a husband that I love very much," she began

"Could you live without him? Can you imagine the pain of having the best thing in your life ripped away from you? Wrested from you just when you thought things were going so well? We had a life planned together - it had already been 12 years and it felt like a couple weeks!" I was shouting at the frumpy, little troll-looking woman now. "I would have taken endless suffering upon myself so she would not have to know pain. I loved her with all I have, and still do, and nothing you can tell me will help me deal with it, there is nothing you can say."

Day

Marija Kasley

White light
In morning's sight
The day just come to break
And I find the time
To wake my mind
For all that is
Today

Blue sky
The sun is high
And the day is now half gone
Take a moment to rest
Before it's up again
With so much left to do
Today

Red blaze
A descending haze
This day is almost done
Having shared friends and food
Home they must now go
Leaving time to think about
Today

Black night
With eyes closed tight
A new day soon to come
So rest and sleep
With dreams so deep
After wishing all
Good night

Untitled

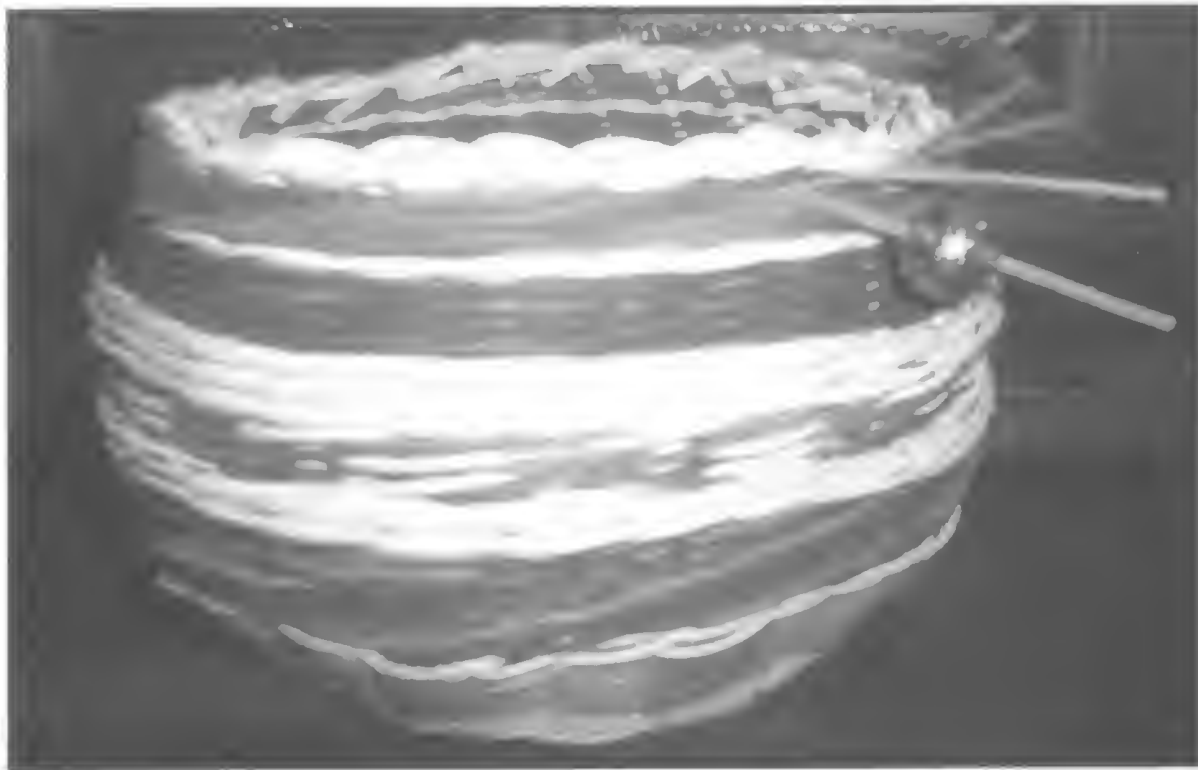
Jessica Lamping

Flames lick the legs of cursed women
Friends in the crowd pleading
Family hiding in houses, weeping
 Shades drawn, black displayed
Women shout out,
 Blasphemies echo in the square
Enemies smile at the smell of burnt flesh
A sick pleasure they'll have to pay for later
Women pass out from the pain
The crowd is silent
Only sound heard is the crackling fire
This didn't have to happen

Why not just agree?
Sign the paper, free yourself
...because it is your name?
What good is a name after death?

Reed Study

Stephanie Sonderman
dyed reed



Measure
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Prometheus

Michael Crowthers
stoneware and enamel



At the Ballet

Erika Lynn Rowshan
photography



Measure
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American Girls and the I Don't Care Attitude

Melissa Klahn

So many American girls today have the attitude of not caring about what people supposedly think of them, and yet they spend so much time in front of the mirror to make that "I Don't Care" attitude stand out to everyone. Today's young girls spend an hour in front of the mirror straightening their hair, fixing their makeup, and trying to look good only to walk out in public with a perfected sneer, trying to prove to everyone that they really don't care. Who are these young girls and women fooling? Perhaps only themselves or maybe some head-over-heels boy who loves the icy glare the girl gives him for staring at her for too long. If these girls did not care about what people thought of them, then they would leave the house in whatever made them comfortable instead of walking around thinking that everyday is a fashion show.

Many of the young women who do not care what other people's opinions of them are generally jump on anyone who says something about the way they look, positive or negative. These women walk down the halls with mock confidence and anger for anyone who thinks they can tell them differently. Wearing short mini skirts and tight clothing makes these women feel superior to other women, even if their confidence is lacking. For many who look at the "I Don't Care" specimen, they see a girl who seems in control and won't be bothered by anyone telling them otherwise, but, to some, the picture is painted differently. The girl with the "I Don't Care" attitude is a snob in all aspects of the word. If she didn't care so much, then she would not be as defensive when someone told her she looked pretty that day, or maybe that eyeliner didn't work for her.

She spends most of her day re-applying makeup and brushing out her nicely straightened or strategically curled hair, dressing to impress. A young lady who doesn't care would not be doing these things, oh no, but to the one who does, it makes perfect sense. In order not to care about what others think, she must look good; it gives her a sense of false confidence to walk down the hallways in heels, a miniskirt, and too much makeup all in thirty degree weather. Doing this is all for the sake of not caring? This is where it starts to get somewhat

confusing for many who do not know the "I Don't Care" girl all that well. If she doesn't care what others think about her, then why is she dressing to impress those who see her sauntering down the hall? She does this because in some strange way she feels superior to those around her; it is all seen in her overly made-up eyes.

She assumes if she walks around like she owns the place and surrounds herself with as many fawning boys as possible, then she will never have to worry about what others think - well, others besides boys. To her, it is a power struggle. She does, in fact, dress to impress, but in her beauty-clouded brain, she doesn't care what others see her as. Her overabundance of mock confidence is, in a way, quite disturbing. This is what many girls are looking up to these days. Girls like pop singers, who supposedly do what they want and do not care what others think. Young, impressionable minds like this attitude, even if the pop stars are running around shaking their cleavage at whoever will look at it, or shaking their butts on anyone who will give them the time of day. Little girls see the glitz and the glamour in the "I Don't Care" attitude, but, deep inside, most little girls will someday realize that they do care what others think of them.

The select few who never figure this idea out are the "I Don't Care" girls. They live their lives in the fantasy realm for a long period of time. This can even be true for the women who supposedly don't care about what people think of them and end up getting plastic surgery. Many say they do this because they wanted to better themselves, not because they wanted to look more visually appealing to those around them. In this day and age, the bigger the boob size, the bigger the "I Don't Care" attitude is shown. Women with the biggest breasts tend to have the lowest self esteem. They run around in their trashy outfits doing anything to grab attention, all the while saying hey, this is me, deal with it, you don't like me, tough. Well here is a news flash for all of them: if they do not care if people do not like them, why do they need to vocalize it and draw attention to themselves? If they honestly did not care what other people think, then they would not be drawing needless attention to the way they looked or acted.

The "I Don't Care" attitude can also be connected to the word "diva." A diva cares supposedly only for herself. She wants to be in the spotlight all of the time no matter what type of spotlight it is, because to the diva, like many celebrities, any type of publicity is good publicity to her, if it gets her known to all. Many women probably know someone like this type of female. She tries to grab attention by the way she dresses or the way she acts, both of

which are in public. Again, if she didn't care for what people thought of her, she would not be spending so much time getting burnt out in the spotlight.

In conclusion, the "I Don't Care" attitude is an epidemic that needs to be stopped now, before it is too late to turn back. If you do not care what others think, then don't spend an hour in front of the mirror in the morning dolling yourself up just to go to lunch or class, because the true "I Don't Care" attitude would walk out of the house in whatever she felt like, not what she thought would draw the most attention to her.

The Light

Meagan Fairchild

The wind is blowing all around me.
There are people reaching out.
But in a fog I just can't see.
My mind and heart starts to doubt.

Clinging to a rock;
My fingers start to slip.
My mind is not at a lock.
I can see my life in clips.

Do I really want to hang on?
This could really be my time...
It won't be that bad to be gone.
I know my loved ones will be fine.

Letting go seems so easy;
While holding on is harder; I know.
It just seems so simple;
To just let go...

Suddenly there is a flash of light;
And I can finally see;
All of those who for me care;
I no longer feel the need to flee.

So hold on a little longer;
Never stop the fight.
Walk away from the darkness.
So that you can see the light.

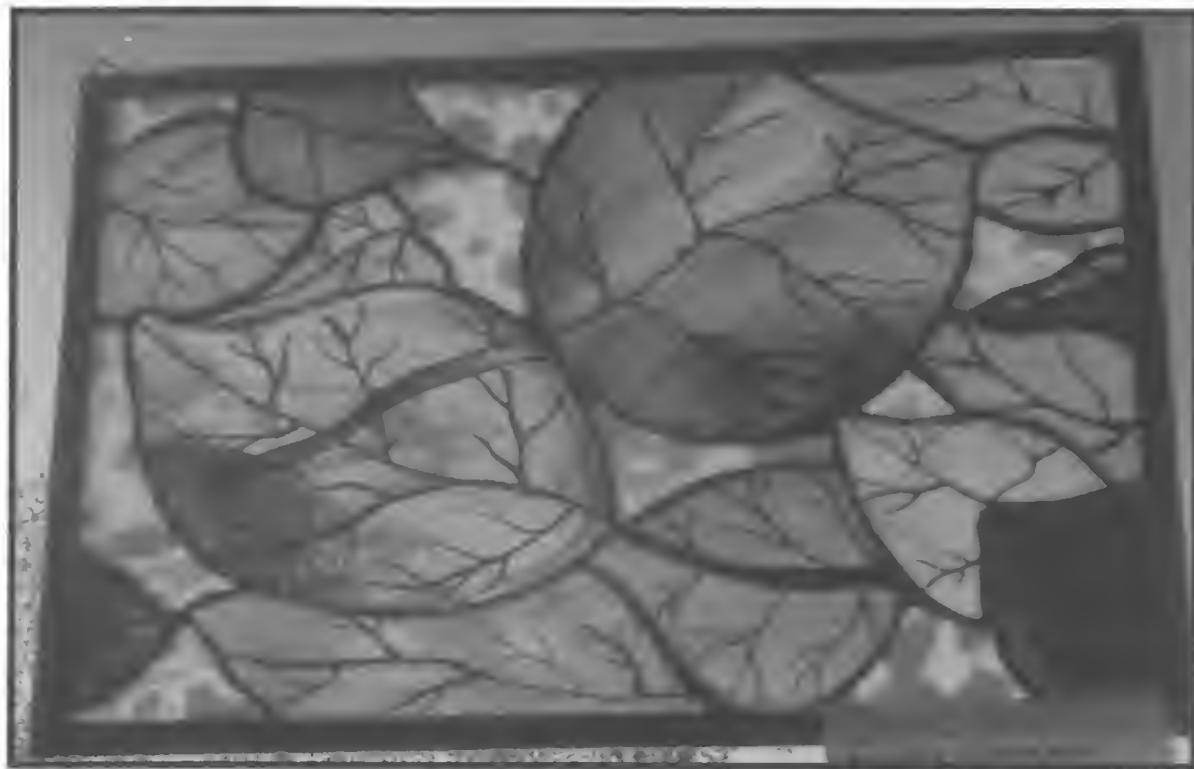
My Computer

David Spencer

I have torn your guts out
And you are lying here opened
And I, like a surgeon operating on his own friend
Sew you back up, hoping you'll live
Your red and yellow blood vessels
Envelop each other and tangle around
As my small intestines do.
I don't need a manual
It's got to be a simple solution
As I dig through your insides
I try to look for my files
Somewhere on this hard disk
There must be a tiny version
Of that screenplay I started but never finished
And contained in one of these microscopic sectors,
There is that old Weezer demo I downloaded
Hiding somewhere in here
Somewhere inside of here
There is a photo album of aimless pictures
Testifying to the vanity of my friends and I
I want to see them again!
You are broken and you've taken my life
You've taken my friends and our instant messages
You've taken my pictures
You've taken my music
And that paper I wrote on Gabriel Garcia Marquez
Don't die on me now
I've put my whole life into you

Autumn in Caseville

Michele Gunkelman
leaded glass



Measure
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The Value of Lincoln

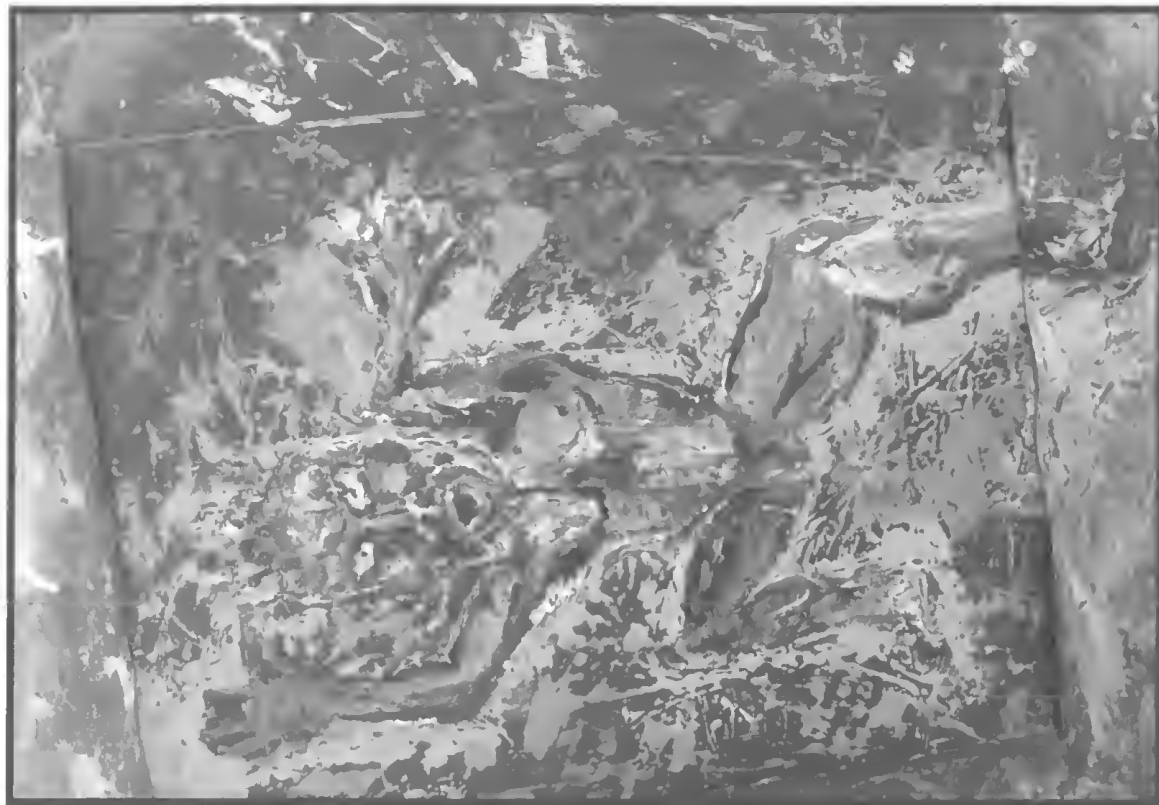
Sarah Osterfeld
photography



Measure
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Where Am I Going

Ryan Preston
acrylic



Measure
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Slow Dance

Katie Smith

Have you ever watched kids on a merry-go-round?
Or listened to the rain slapping on the ground?
Ever followed a butterfly's erratic flight?
Or gazed at the sun into the fading night?

You'd better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

Do you run through each day on the fly?
When you ask "How are you?" Do you hear the reply?
When the day is done, do you lie in bed
With the next hundred chores running through your head?

You'd better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

Ever told your child, we'll do it tomorrow?
And in your haste not see his sorrow?
Ever lost touch, let a good friendship die
Cause you never had time to call and say hi?

You'd better slow down
Don't dance so fast
Time is short
The music won't last

When you run so fast to get somewhere
You miss half the fun getting there
When you worry and hurry through your day
It is like an unopened gift . . . thrown away

Life is not a race
Do take it slower
Hear the music
Before the song is over

Shadow of a Memory

Danielle Marshall

Did I know you before?
When Summer's eve meant everything
And Winter's moon meant romance?
In a place before time,
I recall a face
Features blurred,
But perhaps more clear than anything.
A figure to protect me throughout these lives.
A soul to accompany me throughout these deaths.
Did I know you before?
When memory was new
And hope never died?
Will I find you again in this life,
Or must I wait till the next?
Such a long wait,
But minutes always seem like hours
When we wait for those we love the most.
Return to me soon to teach me to love again.
Did I know you before?
Or are you just a shadow of a memory of a soul I once knew?

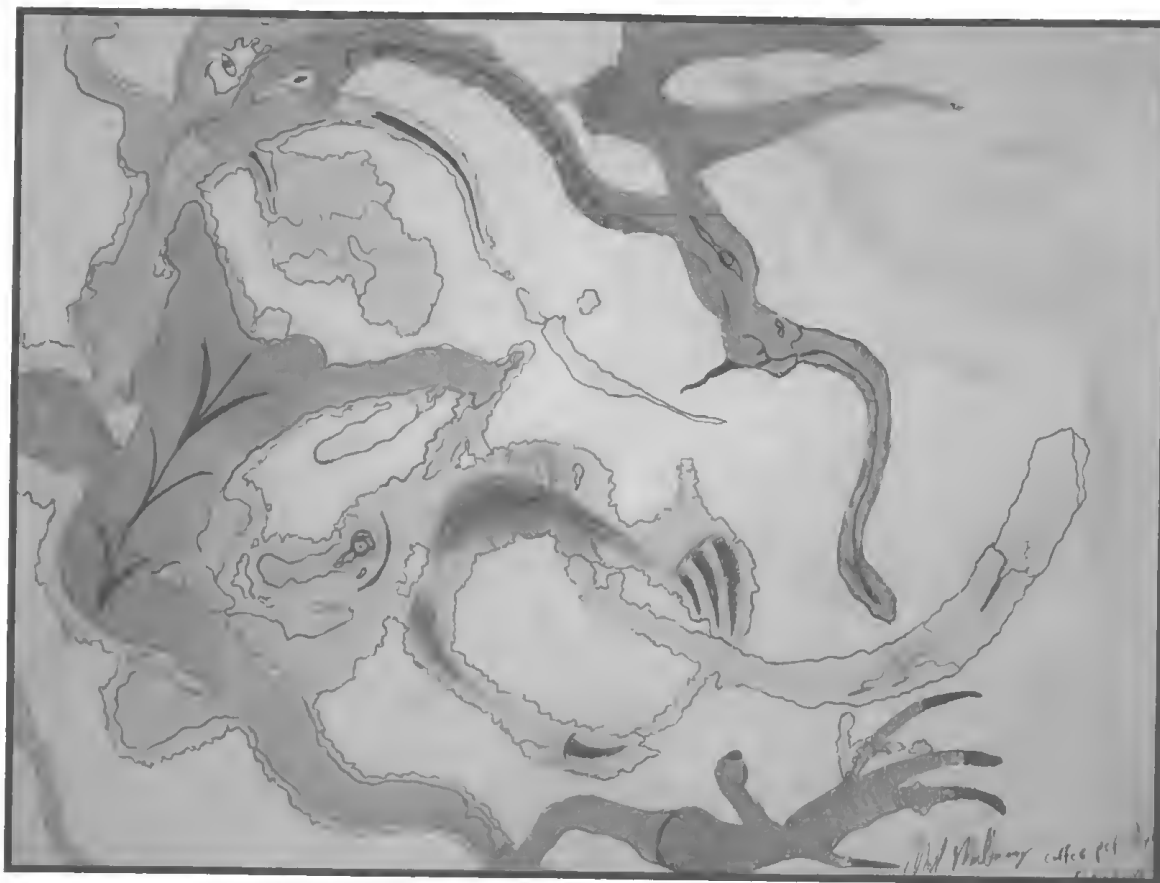
Intimacy

David Spencer

I hope you fall in love someday
When you can really appreciate it
When you need it the most
You'll hold hands
You'll make plans
And he'll make you stronger
Strong enough to not even need him
But you will need him
Because you'll know that without love
You can't be yourself
You can't help your health
And you'll always yearn for it
You should have that feeling
When you make a particular face
In recognition of someone else in the world
Who is laughing at that one thing that makes you laugh
Your smile on the outside
Will be dwarfed by your smile on the inside
And you'll avert your eyes in embarrassment
Because you assumed your amusement was alone
I hope you make that face someday

Untitled

Nick Mallory
coffee, soda, dye and pencil



The Fountain

Ashley Reed
oil



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Untitled

Allen Dean

I turned to look my friend in the eyes; he was beginning to tear around the edges and was having a tough time speaking to me.

"You know, life has been good to me so far, but I have a few regrets," he slurred around the edge of his mostly empty cocktail. He had drunken much through the night and showed no signs of slowing.

"You, regret anything? Come on, now, you're the one who always told me to live life to the fullest, forget regrets, all that business. Where's that at now?"

"I know what I said!" he screamed at me. The force of his statement sent a wave of stillness and quiet through the crowd. They all looked back at us gawking like birds on a wire. I could hear murmurs pass between them and caught some of the phrases like, "Look at that drunk," or "Wow, what an alcoholic," or "That's so sad." None of these could be further from the truth. My friend hardly touched a drink, but when he did, he touched quite a few. He was one of those depressed drunks. When he got drunk, he usually meant business. Tonight was no exception, and I knew I was soon to find out what drove him to this particular stool and what drove him to drink this particularly large amount of booze.

"Let's start heading home," I said as I stood on wobbly legs. "I'll get a cab; we'll talk about this at my place." I knew I was getting into quite an adventure down memory lane, but I could tell he meant to follow this train of thought all the way to the conclusion, and a crowded bar is not a place for a sentimental drunk to start spewing out his past problems. The cab ride home was uneventful enough; at one point, I thought he was going to pass out right there, but instead he perked up at the sight of a liquor store and told the driver to pull over for a minute. He got out of the cab, entered the store, and a few seconds later stumbled back to the car with three bottles of foul brown liquid in his unsteady hands.

"Maybe we'll have a few more when we get there eh?" he stammered while cracking an impish smile. Yep, this was going to be a long night.

We arrived at my place shortly after the stop at the liquor store. My place of residence is a small apartment in downtown Chicago, not far from the river and a short cab ride

from the train station. I travel a lot in my work and find it convenient to live in close proximity to the train. My friend had opened one of his bottles in the cab, despite my protests against this action. He was taking a long swig as he crossed the threshold of the elevator and fell sprawling in the hallway of my building. Remarkably, he did not spill a drop of the vile brown liquid and continued to drink on the floor.

"Come on, man, lets get inside," I said, now becoming a bit irritated at his drunken antics. Once inside, he seemed to settle a bit. We sat opposite each other at my dining room table, him with his bottle of whatever he bought, and me with a deck of cards and a cribbage board.

"Why, I think a card game would be a terrific idea!" he blurted upon seeing the cards and board. So we began to play. After a few hands, I began to ask him questions about what he had said in the bar. "So what was all this talk about regrets then, when we were at the bar? You're normally such a happy-go-lucky kind of guy, I never would have pictured you as regretting anything." This statement seemed to touch a nerve with my friend; he stopped counting up his score on this particular hand, put the cards down, and stared out the window. After a few minutes of this, I probed deeper. "Hey, man, if you don't want to talk, that's fine with me, I only ask because you brought it up earlier, you know?"

"I know," he said, emotion beginning to choke the voice in his throat. "I'll tell you, I only have a few regrets, what you said earlier is true, for the most part anyway. I try to live my life like there is no tomorrow; I don't usually believe in regrets, but recently some things have happened to me that well...." He could not continue to speak, in his drunken state he was overcome with emotions and began to weep openly in front of me. Now I have known this man all of my life, and I have only seen him cry on a handful of occasions, the death of both of his parents, the death of his first dog, and the death of our dear friend. This is not a particularly normal activity for this person to partake in, so it made me a bit on edge.

"I think it's getting a bit late, maybe we should talk about this later," I said, feeling sorry that I even followed the line of questioning this far.

"No," he said, "sit down. I want to get this off my chest; I hope it'll make me feel better. You remember Natalie, the girl who we met at school and who kind of hung around with us?"

"Yes," I said. I could remember Natalie; she was a beautiful. Long brown hair that

curled into tight ringlets at the end, and a smile that could light a room. She was the kind of girl that everyone wanted to be around. My friend and she were very close; at one point, I thought they were together, but nothing ever materialized. They were the best of friends.

"I loved that girl with all my heart. After the day I met her, every day my first thought was of her. Everything I did was for her, I would have died rather than see her in any pain whatsoever. I really did love that girl, the only woman I can truly say that about, you know?" The strange thing is that I already knew this; I could tell that whenever he was around her, he lit up. He seemed to be a happier person when she was around, a more complete individual. As corny as it sounds, she really completed him.

"Yeah," I said. "She was a special girl, but what does that have to do with the way you're acting, man?"

He looked away for a long time; I thought maybe he would just drop it and go to bed, but he turned back with a tear rolling down his cheek and an army more welling up in his eyes. "I loved her so much, yet I didn't do anything about it! I never told her, I never let her know I cared so much about her. All I did was suffer in silence and watch as she lived her life. The only time I was truly happy was when I could see her. I...I..." It was too much for him; he began to break down. After a few more moments, he composed himself and continued with his story. "Well, I found out this morning that she died in a car accident. She was hit by a drunk driver while walking home the other night. She died instantly. She died, and I never got to tell her how I felt. Now she'll never know, she'll never know..." He trailed off again and began crying. He wept so hard he began to wretch. With the combination of alcohol and weeping, he began to get sick.

"Let's go to the bathroom, man, hold on - let's go lets go." I guided him to the restroom and made sure he was alright. During this whole time, I began to weep as well, this whole moment was all too much for me. I could see that his heart was broken, he was now a shell of the former man that he was.

"I'm sorry you have to see this," he said, wiping the corner of his mouth clean of the sick. "I'm really sorry. I think I'm going to bed, and you mind if I crash here?"

"Not at all - make yourself at home." I was exhausted after all this and was unconscious shortly after hitting the pillow.

I awoke the next day to the shock of my life. I walked from my bed to the bathroom

next door. I was still a bit groggy and hungover from the night's events. After I had washed up, I went into the living room, and there he was, lying on the ground. There was a pool of blood around his head, and he was laying face down. A small caliber hand gun was still in his grasp in his right hand. He had killed himself in his drunken despair. On the table was a note written to me. Stunned, I made my way towards it. I felt as if I was floating. Everything seemed unreal; this couldn't be happening - he was such a happy person. I read the note and began to cry harder than I ever had in my life. My best friend was gone and wrote his final words to me and Natalie.

"To my dear friend, again I am sorry that you had to see this, but I see no other course of action I can take. I have no reason to live, and the light of my life has been extinguished and cannot go on any longer."

"Why would you do this?" I asked the empty apartment, "Why?"

Measure